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A MASTER OF FORTUNE

"THE NEWPORT SERIES"
OF MODERN FICTION



A WOMAN WITH A FUTURE
By Mrs. Andrew Dean



A MASTER OF FORTUNE
By Julian Sturgis

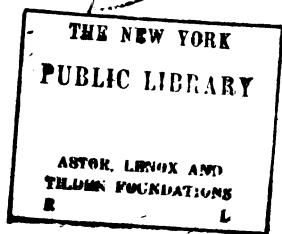


IN PREPARATION

A FULL CONFESSION



ONE DAY'S COURTSHIP
By Robert Barr



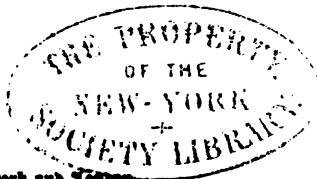


"'I'LL WRITE MY ADDRESS,' SHE SAID."—*Page 93.*

A MASTER OF FORTUNE

BY JULIAN STURGIS

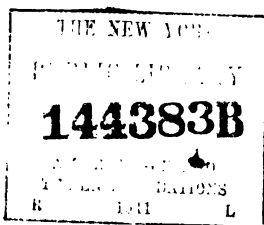
AUTHOR OF "JOHN-A-DREAMS,"
"COMEDY OF A COUNTRY
HOUSE," ETC.



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A MASTER OF FORTUNE.

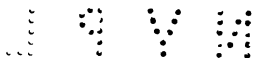
Part 1.

CHAPTER I.

IT was after twelve, and the river lay in a blaze of summer light when Carteret and Seafeld rowed up in their pair-oar to bathe at the weir. A melancholy brooded on the stream in spite of all the dancing of myriads of sunbeams, in spite of the glad voices of younger boys sporting in and out of the water at "Upper Hope" and at "Athens," names eloquent of the future and of the past. It was their last

THE END

row together, for the summer half was almost at an end, and Carteret, at least, was bound to leave, since a week ago he had accepted, with rebellious feelings, the fact of his nineteenth birthday. He had been feeling very old of late, nursing the grim belief, which must be accepted with other uncompromising facts, that youth and school ended together, and that the life of a man must be very poor fun in comparison. The triumphs of boyhood he had chosen to take with a certain fastidious air, as if he held that they were overvalued by other fellows; but there was no question that they were at least far more worthy of effort than the judgships or generalships, the stars or garters of later life. The joy of the morning was gone for him, though it played on the river and on the wet blade of his oar, as he feathered it in the sun, rowing with a lissome boyishness, which he thought to have left behind him for ever. Perhaps the



stroke, behind whom Carteret rowed so easily, made him feel the more manly, for Seafeld was slighter and lighter, and more wholly and gladly the boy. Carteret could pull him round with ease, and had been forced to moderate his strength in the late races. They had been held the prettiest pair on the river, and the steering of "bow" had been exceptionally fine. And now they had come to their last row together, to their last bathe at the familiar place.

The river came tumbling over the weir, with its summer waters all at play and foaming; and it was there, moved by the genius of the place, hanging by his left shoulder to the old punt moored out in the tumultuous stream, that the silent Carteret spoke words which amazed his friend.

"I shall miss you most awfully," he said.

Seafeld, who was hanging by both hands from the punt, raised his eye-

brows with wonder. He had never heard such an expression of feeling from the friend who was looking down on him, frowning a little. The bright young face, which lay like a flower on the surface of the water, seemed to the more serious lad the very spirit of the youth and joy which he must now forego. If poets and novelists and writers of a myriad "Vales" had made these feelings on leaving school trite and contemptible to his youthful scorn, yet there the feelings were, for all his scorn, and had parted his closed lips, so that he heard himself say clearly above the music of the tumbling waters those words, so sentimental, so absurd,—

"I shall miss you awfully—awfully."

"What will you do without me to look after you?" said the boy from the surface of the stream, looking up, smiling, delighted.

"Oh, you!" said the other, with sudden measureless contempt; and he

placed his open hand on the smiling face and pushed it under water.

And now it was time to be going and to be done with the joy of the river. The two boys came dripping up out of the water, and dried and clad themselves with their zephyrs and flannel, and so got carefully into their dainty boat, and slid level and easy, moving like one down the enchanted stream.

When Seafeld had stepped from the boat on to the rafts and was making for the changing-room, the waterman, who held bow's outrigger, said bluntly to Carteret, whose eyes were following his friend, "If you'd had a stronger stroke, you'd have won the pulling."

"Rot!" said Carteret, as he touched the man's shoulder in stepping from his place. But, as he followed his friend indoors, he said to himself, with a curt recognition of his own folly, that he would rather have been beaten with Seafeld than have won with another.

"What an ass I am!" he added to himself; "I shall be always chucking good things for some whim or other." It was a moment of rare enlightenment; and yet, perhaps, the story of his youth may show if, after all, he was so foolish in freeing himself of some things held good. There are many more foolish beasts than the ass.

CHAPTER II.

IT was a pleasant day in spring, yet charming by her late coming and caprice. She mocked and tempted as she fled to the willows and touched their twigs to buds. Willow copses were there and little woods, hangers-on of the hillsides, and the hills were low and of gentle slope and the valley wide and green. It was one of those scenes of which our England is prodigal, not seeking admiration, not proclaiming her beauty, but charming, tender, caressing, to be remembered with cool joy by exiles under burning suns.

It was the day and the scene of a little steeple-chase meeting, which was

held by a college of Oxford, a very quiet meeting, since it was not only in defiance of the college rules but of the known wishes of the dons, which was a more serious matter. And yet it was remarkably free from the less attractive features of the race-course. There were no professional betting-men, no rancorous clamor, no crowd from London. Only around the course were wagonettes of neighboring gentle-folk, a local coach, some whilom Oxford sportsmen renewing their youth, and a mere handful of present undergraduates, who had come to see their fellows in the new dignity of silk, the new responsibility of racing. A mere handful these, for in each generation of Oxford undergraduates there are fewer who hunt or keep horses, and this meeting was promoted and patronized by but one set of one college.

But, if those who were to ride and their friends were few in number, they were vastly important. If they were a

small set, they took themselves with sufficient seriousness; and they regarded the rest of their college, and yet more the rest of their university, as "smugs" of various degree, but in a mass "smugs," a fine comprehensive term for the other fellows. They were a fair sample of the rising hope of the new plutocracy, all rich for boys, almost all with assured prospects of future wealth, some of historic names, but all, whatever their parents, with a natural contempt, inoffensive because they had never thought about it, for those who could not afford to live as they lived. If they looked on the mass of undergraduates with a contemptuous carelessness, they regarded each other with care. It was the time of the full tyranny of dress; and the colors and breeches of the riders, the overcoats and gaiters of their supporters, displayed a rigid correctness, and betrayed a careful study, which contrasted comically with the guileless

knowingness of their fresh faces. They looked like plotting infants; they were too conscious of their garments and their walk; they were unnaturally serious. Only now and then the rigidity of the performance, and the solemnity due to that deep-seated reverence for sport which Britons of their class must feel, or affect to feel, was broken by an explosion of laughter, an outbreak of juvenile chaff, a friendly blow or shove. If those who rode were open to the criticism of more mature sportsmen, they had at least that gift of boyhood, of the boyhood which haunted them and made them nervous in their manliness, that artless grace which makes boys' cricket, rowing, football or riding more pleasant to the eye than the more accurate exercises of older persons. Among these boys, for, after all, boys they were, the tallest and the strongest, the oldest in mind and body was Alan Carteret.

Carteret had spent two years at

Oxford with small profit, or, so the dons of his college would have said; and with their verdict he would have agreed emphatically; the more emphatically if he were expected to dissent. He would have added that he had not wished to go to Oxford, and had known that he would do no good there. There were some who held that no freshman so arrogant had ever come up. He had been received, almost as a matter of course, into a small set, of whom some had been his friends at Eton, and others his predecessors in the high places of the school; and for two years he had lived almost wholly with these youths, who were exclusive to a high degree. And it must be confessed that, if they were not a little arrogant in their bearing towards others, Alan Carteret was arrogant to them. He found himself distinctly the cleverest man of his set, the only one, he told them sometimes, capable of thought. They on their

side thought him a remarkable chap; they chaffed him when he seemed amiable; it was a well-worn joke with them to call him a "beastly radical." If Carteret was a radical, beastly or otherwise, he was certainly the most arrogant of the species; and to say this is to make no small claim.

Carteret was going to ride, but at the moment his mind was busy with other thoughts. He was walking up and down, well covered by his long overcoat, and listening with a frown, and with a compression of lips which was far more common than in his school-days, to the expostulations of the ingenuous Seafeld. Seafeld, who was the only out-college man whom Carteret ever saw, was moved at times from the pleasure of his sunny, sociable existence by the sudden leap of his old boyish idea that he ought to "look after" his friend. Now he had come all this way from Oxford, and out of his ordinary courses, partly to see his

friend ride, partly to seize a chance of reading him a lecture.

"He knows quite well what you are doing to-day; he hinted pretty plainly that it was nearly the last 'straw'; and I'm sure he meant me to tell you."

"It doesn't interest me," said Carteret through his teeth.

Now as this "he" was the most influential tutor of Carteret's college, and Seafeld had come down full of importance, the bearer of an informal ultimatum, these words of his friend seemed strangely inadequate. He pressed the arm which he held, for greater emphasis, and said, "I barely know him. He must have asked me to breakfast to talk about you. He said the college couldn't stand it; that you never kept any rules except by accident; that it was an awful pity, because you could still get a 'First' if you tried."

Alan gave a grunt of contempt. That tutor's opinion pleased him, but

he would not recognize the pleasure. "A First!" he said, as if to appear in the First Class in the Final Schools of Oxford were something contemptible. In ordinary circumstances he would have said no more; but at this hour the race, to which he was so soon to ride, his first experience of steeple-chasing, excited him more than he allowed; and the excitement took the form of unusual garrulity. Even as he walked he was testing the hardness of the ground with his heel, riding the race in imagination, only half attentive to his anxious friend.

"What should I want a 'First' for?" he said. "I don't want to be a don; if I did, I couldn't be. My life is laid out before me like a *damned* turnpike."

The phrase offended Seafeld; and it showed a train of thought which always seemed to him extravagant and even absurd. "It's silly, old chap," he said, "to complain of having money

and lands and all that in prospect; and as for a 'First,' it's a good start in any career—politics or anything."

"Politics!" grunted Carteret, and his friend expected no more. But the excitement of the imminent race, the stirring of his ardent blood set the tongue of the taciturn youth wagging more freely. "You think it's rot," he said, standing still a moment for emphasis; "but it's a fact that it bores me to death."

"What bores you to death?"

"The last of the Carterets—Carteret ultimus."

Seafeld lifted his slender eyebrows.

"The one use of being a man is to choose one's life," said Alan. "Can I choose? I wanted to go into the army; Carteret ultimus might be killed; so I am sent to Oxford. I want now to go exploring in the middle of Africa; Carteret ultimus might be lost; so I must take my degree and go home and be a magistrate and sit on

poachers, when I know in my bones how much better sport it is to poach than to shoot one's lawful birds. If I'd been born a laborer, I should be the biggest poacher in the place. My grandfather has chosen my horses for the safety of Carteret ultimus. Some day my grandfather will choose me a wife, and there will be a little Carteret ultimus, and it won't matter what becomes of me, and I shall go off alone to the Equator and be eaten by a nigger."

Never had Seafeld heard so long a speech from his friend. It was uttered without a smile; there was even a note of pity when he spoke of his future son. Seafeld was well-nigh silenced; but he was amazingly conscientious that day, and the time was short. "Well, any way," he said, "do be a bit steady after to-day. I shall hate it if you are sent down."

"Shall you care?" asked Carteret, his rare smile dawning as he looked on

his friend's face. "Shall you care, Tommy?"

It was a sign of rare tenderness when he called him "Tommy."

"Shall I care!" said Tommy pettishly.

"It's thundering good of you, for I've always worried you almost to death."

"Oh, I like it."

Alan laughed. "I'll try and be a better boy," he said, "after to-day. I didn't care to ride in these rotten races, but none of the other chaps can keep this brute of Johnson's straight."

"Swagger!" said Seafeld, who had now forgotten his mission and was beaming with friendliness. Alan regarded him with scorn. "You don't suppose I think I can ride," he said: "none of us can ride; we can just sit on and be carried round. I'm not such a weak cat as the others, that's all. I shall win if I don't fall off."

"And if you do? He's a nasty,

dangerous brute. Wouldn't your grandfather be in a funk if he knew what you were up to?"

Carteret burst out laughing. "Tommy," said he, "if I break my neck, gather my august remains and send them to my grandfather by parcels post, labelled 'Carteret Ultimus. This side up with care.'"

"And if you don't break your neck, promise to give up breaking every rule in the place; promise to read five hours a day; promise——"

"Hold your jaw!" said Alan, putting a large hand on Tommy's mouth. "If I do any of these things, it will be for your sake. So there!"

What Tommy might have said to this is yet unknown, for, ere he had recovered the use of his tongue, two youths came hurrying, important, with the weight of the Jockey Club upon their innocent shoulders. The fateful moment was at hand.

Tommy hurried away in a fine fuss

to the landing side of the biggest jump. There, close against the course, he waited, and, as he waited, felt each moment more empty and more weak. At last they came, the thundering of hoofs, the sound of the rush; the horses were all close together, and Tommy saw his friend's set face as his unruly beast swept over the leap. The drop was deep, and Tommy felt as if the whole mass of flying brutes was on him; then they had passed, as he sighed for relief that so far his charge was safe. He ran across to the winning-post, and arrived panting as Alan rode in an easy winner.

Tommy forgot all his anxieties in simple zeal for the winner. He met him, as he dismounted, with beaming eyes and hearty smacks on the shoulder. It was provoking of Alan to appear unusually cold and indifferent to his victory. All excitement had passed with the race. Indeed, throughout his journey back to Oxford, he re-

mained so quiet and apparently thoughtful that optimistic Tommy imagined the slow moving of the best resolutions. Only it occurred to some gay spirits that evening to celebrate the victory of Johnson's brute by a bonfire in quad ; and it occurred on a sudden to Carteret to burn the furniture of his rooms upon the blazing pile. It is also said by some that he added college property, on which he had no claim. It is certain that the next day he greedily took to himself the entire blame, abandoned his handsome but now bare rooms, and left Oxford for ever.

CHAPTER III.

ALAN CARTERET was driving into London from the west in a late afternoon of summer, and the long shadows of his burnished coach and his four glossy horses were thrown grotesquely before him on the road. He liked driving a team; it was still a new amusement for him, and it made some demands on his strength and skill. Of the occupations which he had accepted since his abrupt departure from Oxford, the setting up of a coach and learning to drive it had pleased him most. At first, indeed, when his skill and practice were of the slightest,

it had been both exciting to him and alarming to his teacher, who had found himself conveyed through the most crowded thoroughfares at the busiest hours with an impetuosity happily uncommon in his pupils. But already the coach began to pall on Alan; he was beginning to drive too well, and to think that he might as well turn some sort of handle at his hand and that his well-taught, well-groomed, well-matched team would go gaily forward of themselves.

On the box by Alan's side was the beautiful Mrs. Chippenham. As he glanced down at her sideways, he recognized with grim disfavor that it was as correct to display the beautiful Mrs. Chippenham on the box-seat, as to give an airing to the two serious, well-matched grooms at the back. As she turned her face towards him, he perceived in the slanting sunlight the powder on her exquisite nose, and saw it with a new disfavor. A week ago

he had fancied himself in love with this lady, and for an evening had seen the two formal lines of the life before him blurred and made resplendent by the glow of a hopeless passion. Now it seemed impossible.

"What are you laughing at?" said the lady, opening her large eyes.

"At myself," said Alan, flicking his off-leader for no object in the world with his long whip.

The horse, which was the most nervous and most finely bred of the four, jumped under this uncalled-for stroke, and the beautiful Mrs. Chippenham, who was at least as nervous as the horse, gave a little cry. To be shown on box-seats was for the beautiful Mrs. Chippenham a pleasure shot with a thousand tremors. When she was nervous, even on her sofa at home, a vision often recurred of a graceful flight through air, and of her fine nose knocked against a horrid, hard, cold lamp-post. This young Carteret made

her more uneasy than any of her coachmen.

"What a strange boy you are," she said, gripping a rail and hardening her heart, while she raised her unutterable eyes with an effort little short of heroic.

Alan said nothing. He had heard like remarks before; and, moreover, the dancing leader occupied him for the moment to the exclusion of the fair. He was stimulated, interested, pleased; only tardy conscience prevented him from flicking the rebellious animal again. The grooms preserved their highly-cultivated calm, the grooms and Mr. Chippenham, who occupied, as usual, a back seat. Calm was the essence of Mr. Chippenham, who was a man of few words, but whose admirable manner seemed to say to his wife's acquaintance that he was ready to respond if they recognized him, but kept in reserve a supply of native dignity amply sufficient to sup-

port him if they ignored his existence. If a coach were upset, he could be counted on to fall as correctly as possible and not to make a scene when he picked up his wife. He had an air of being always ready to pick up his wife; though it must not be inferred from this that the lady had ever needed such a service. Indeed, the question which occurred more often to the onlooker was where the lady had picked up her husband; but, after all, there he was, a prop, a stay, a pledge, a solid fact, an effective, well-executed, peaceful background to a brilliant figure, a restful pause in airy, brilliant, personal conversations.

"How I envy you your nerve!" breathed Mrs. Chippenham softly, with her fine eyes raised again.

Alan responded with a grunt, but added, after a minute, more politely, "You needn't be afraid of these beasts, you know; they are patented."

"You droll creature!"

"Next year I'll have a little lamp instead. Will you drive with me behind a little lamp?"

"You might have said that you wouldn't want a light if you carried me. See what a chance you missed, you foolish boy!" She had a caressing way of saying "boy," which had been often effective. "Oh! for goodness' sake look at your horses!"

"I suppose I ought to say I'd rather look at you."

"You *are* droll. I can't understand you." This statement had often been effective also.

"There's nothing to understand," said Alan gloomily. "Ah! would *yer!*" This last was addressed to the mare, who was still unruly.

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Chippenham shrilly, and "Oh!" muttered her husband, rising quickly to his feet.

They had nearly reached their journey's end, and were going freely down a long street, which lay east and west,

when the accident happened. Alan had his eye on a slight, frail-looking woman crossing the road before him; he saw that she had plenty of time to cross, and did not check his horses. Suddenly, however, in the middle of the road the woman paused, and seemed to sway as if from weakness. With all his force Alan pulled up the team; the woman tottered forward again, and would have gone clear, had not the off-leader, still uneasy, resented the sudden check, and bounded forward again, as the driver's wrist allowed her play. Thus bounding, she just touched the woman with her shoulder, who, at the touch, spun round like a dry leaf in a whirlwind and fell. In a minute the grooms were at the horses' heads, and Carteret was standing on the pavement, holding the woman unconscious on his arm. She was like a wisp of scanty clothes, he thought; even her dead weight seemed incredibly light. And now

Mrs. Chippenham approached him, pale and large-eyed. She had been helped to earth by her husband, and with the solid ground beneath her little feet she made a great effort to rise to the level of woman's mission. She came trembling towards Alan with her salts in her hand. He took the bottle from her, noticed the shaking of her hands, and nodded frowning to Mr. Chippenham. "Take her home," he said; "I can see to this."

Mr. Chippenham bowed his agreement, and nodded to a passing cabman, and the lady, murmuring expostulations, but profoundly conscious beneath all of the safety of her nose, was incontinently driven away.

Carteret, left alone with his unaccustomed burden, looked impatiently round him. He was the centre of a growing crowd, who thronged around him and his coach with eager curiosity. "Take it home," he called out to his men; "I'll walk."

Then the coach was driven away down the long, respectable street, a street of discreet and prosperous shops, broken here and there by higher, newer buildings, which were let at rather high rents in flats.

Where Carteret stood, there was a shop of old furniture and *bric-à-brac*, which had protruded some of its wares on to the pavement of the street, and more freely on to the paved court, at the entrance of which it stood guard. It was at the entrance of this court that Alan found himself. "Stand back," he said angrily to the crowd; "do you want to stifle her? Does any one know where she lives?"

"Down there," said a man of few words, nodding to the court—"No 7." Alan glanced down the place. The street was at this evening hour full of the western sunlight, but the court at right angles looked dark and cheerless. The woman had an air of such refinement, and her clothes, though poor

enough, were so neat, that her abode struck him in a moment as incongruous. Yet was he glad of the man's plain statement, and promptly carried his light burden in the direction indicated. The court had contributed most of the crowd, and they followed him down it with a new interest, pressing upon him to his lively annoyance. The door of No. 7 stood open, but a dingy loafer occupied most of the space. Him Carteret removed without a word, and as he thrust him aside, he felt the woman stir on his arm, gather herself together and try to stand alone. "Thanks," she said; "I think I fell; I am all right now. Don't—don't——" She passed before him into the dirty passage, and he knew that she wished him not to enter the house. But, while he hesitated, she stumbled at the foot of the stairs and would have fallen again, had he not caught her. Without more words he began to help her up the stairs, which

creaked under his strong feet. The stairs were rotten, the banisters broken in many places, and everywhere the noisome dirt, which gathers where passages and staircase are common to many families and it is no one's duty to keep them clean. On the second floor the woman stopped, and Carteret pushed open a crazy door and entered the room. A defective floor, a strip of torn carpet, a meagre bed, a basin on a rickety chair—all the details of the scene proclaimed an abject poverty, and only at a second glance suggested a feeble effort to preserve a remnant of tidiness, cleanliness, self-respect. A young girl, who was sewing on the floor close under the dim window, rose to her feet with a cry. There was a strange note of anger in it; her dark eyes shone; her small white teeth were gleaming. To Alan's eyes she had some look of a gipsy, though like her mother an unmistakable air of ladyhood. She helped her mother to the

poor bedstead and laid her down. Then she turned with a frown on her thin, drawn face; her anger was for the prosperous young man; she hated to see him there, to see him looking about him with stupid amazement. "I beg your pardon," he said in answer to her look. "Can't I do anything? Fetch a doctor or anything?"

"No."

Her fierceness roused an answering fire in the combative youth. "I'll go," he said; "but I shall come back. It can't be right that people like you—" he glanced from her to the prone figure on the bed—"should be living here."

"Right!" cried the girl. "We don't live here from choice; we are poor—poor."

"But the house is in a shameful state. I did not know there were such places in this part of London. I'll see to that at least."

"You'll do no good," said the girl. "It's on the Carteret estate."

Alan stood staring, till the girl, with a bitter laugh at his stupid gaze, turned from him to the poor woman on the bed, who seemed to have recovered her small share of daily strength. Her eyes sought the young man as if she would speak, would thank him ; but he only bowed to her in silence, and went out quickly, and hurried down the crazy stairs. His head was hot, his thoughts whirling.

CHAPTER IV.

ALAN had received a stunning blow. That was the one fact which was sufficiently clear to him. He did not yet know if it had hurt him, or how much. It made him gasp ; yet he was presently conscious of a sort of relief. What if the vague discontents of his too-easy life had been brought at a blow to one question, to one moment of decision? All the strength in him sprang up at the blow. The immediate effect was that he set his face towards Hampstead and walked forward ; it was a help to sane thought. And soon his thoughts began to take

order, moving with the rhythm of his feet. He had stumbled upon something wrong, a rotten something in his peculiar state of Denmark. What if it were his affair to set it right? He came home hot and tired; he had barely time to dress for dinner; he had forgotten that his grandfather gave one of his dinners that night, and that he had promised to be present. Sir Simon Carteret had been giving dinners for many years; the dinners were all of one pattern; the guests had been dining through many London seasons. Saddles of mutton and quails innumerable they had consumed year after year and the salmon of many rivers. Only the entrées varied. When Alan entered the drawing-room rather late, most of the guests had come. There was the Ambassador and his wife, who dined out so much because they both talked English. There was the Duke of Clackmannan, with his decorative ribbon; young Lord Osric Lester, who

had been to Candahar on his bicycle; young Mr. Stanley Robson, who had stayed at home and read blue books. These two young politicians, of whom neither was much over forty, were rival authorities on Foreign Affairs. The family interest of the Lesters was more than balanced by the solid wealth of Mr. Robson's father. Moreover, the younger Robson had married Lady Marcia Grant, whose diamonds illuminated the dim paths of his studies, and now reflected the many candles of Sir Simon's spacious rooms. Sir Simon was conservative in lights; large, resplendent chandeliers were thick with wax candles; for him electric light merely offered opportunities for judicious investment of surplus capital. And Lawrence Toovey was of the party, the Lawrence Toovey who was the man who wanted to marry Harriet Delafield, who had first dined out in that character, and who had so continued to dine out ever since.

Even now, if any one was moved to ask who he was, the explanation was ready ; he was still the man who once wanted to marry Harriet Delafield. In a tired society a label of this sort is equally convenient for a man and for his friends. These people, with Ruthven Delmayne, who had never needed any explanation, were the more remarkable of the guests. The rest were solid men with admirable wives, ladies who had managed to remain undeniably respectable without forfeiting all claims to fashion. Some frivolous persons thought the Carteret dinners dull, but there was a pervading and comforting feeling of the right people, and the cook at least was an artist.

Presently large doors were opened noiselessly, and, nine couples in all, they passed with murmurs and a rich, subdued rustling into the sombre splendor of the temple of serious cookery, the faint incense of delicate

savors, the commencement of a solemn function. Moving silent and adroit on thick-piled carpet, the very men who waited had something of a sacerdotal air.

Sir Simon's dinners were remarkably good, and as long as good. To Alan this particular banquet seemed interminable. The atmosphere of good living choked him. A hungry girl's face mocked him, scorned him. Of most of the talk he was unconscious. Only fragments now and then caught his ear, playing like river-lights at night on the full stream of his thoughts. "Think of the poor duke," Mr. Toovey was saying; "he has had to shut up Seedling *and* Ringwold! He lives almost wholly at Chilbury when he isn't in London."

"It's shocking," said a lady, who always sympathized with dukes; "no fortune can stand it."

"Are you selling land?" said somebody in an awe-struck whisper, as if

she expected for answer a secret of the confessional.

"I wish we could," said Lady Marcia with the best part of her attention on her plate: "ours is retailed in the old way, and Stanley won't hear of any new-fangled dodges; so we must wait till Bobby's son is of age, and Bobby has only just gone to Harrow."

"Before Bobby's Bobby is twenty-one your rents will have melted into moonshine," said Delmayne, with no trace of sympathy in his tone.

"Yes; isn't it dreadful?" said the lady emphatically but vaguely. "What are we coming to?"

"To the workhouse," said Delmayne.

"Yes;" said she suavely. "Now *these* are delicious; I can't think why our cook can't make quenelles like these. We had him from the Bleichroders, and he gets more than our poor dear Vicar and yet he cannot make a decent quenelle."

"I suppose the Vicar couldn't either."

"Of course not. What an idea!"

The entrée finished, the lady turned to Alan, who sat on her other side. She had suddenly remembered him, and that he would be heir to all this opulent atmosphere and profusion of wax candles; she was very gracious.

"Now, I suppose you are dreadfully fast," she said, smiling; "I'm sure you can tell me all about that Kittie Warbler. Poor dear Sara Mongeham is in despair about that ridiculous boy of hers; it is *so* amusing. Now do tell me! What is her attraction? a little snub-nosed thing."

Alan found himself wishing that his dinner was no longer than Miss Warbler's nose, if snub it were! He had to confess his ignorance of the young woman, and suspected that he fell in the estimation of the virtuous matron beside him. At last the dinner ended, and the ladies, exchanging

questioning glances, bending necks and smiling in deprecation of manner, got themselves at last out of the room.

Then the men stretched themselves, and pushed the decanters with indifference, and almost immediately cigarettes were lighted.

Alan found Ruthven Delmayne looking at him sidelong with handsome lack-lustre eyes. "You are a lucky young devil," he said lazily. "How strong you look! You may last ten years or nearly."

"Till I die?" asked Alan.

"Till you are bored to death." He smoked a little and then said, "There are so few things and so little variety in them. I've killed 37,671 pheasants, and I don't care if I never see another. And women——" Here he smoked again. "There is more variety in women," he said; "a little more. You lucky young dog! I give you ten years, or even twelve, before you have exhausted life."

"Thanks!"

"Salmon too," murmured Delmayne, rather to his cigarette than to his neighbor,—“a first salmon is some sport—and foxes, if your nerve lasts. Mine didn't.” He seemed to be lazily considering scenes of the past, smoking slowly and with pauses like an almost exhausted volcano.

CHAPTER V.

IN a sombre, silent, ancient street dedicated to the labors of solicitors Alan was searching up and down the open doorways for the names of his grandfather's lawyers. He had avoided Sir Simon when the guests of the evening had gone, and he had come forth at an early hour that he might not see him in the morning. He wished to see the lawyer first. Presently he found the names, and advancing into the stone passage found also the door of the firm. Within were two young clerks, who sat writing in a sort of high pen, which reminded

the visitor of wax-work criminals as displayed in their old quarters in Baker Street. One of the caged youths received Alan's card, slipped out and returned almost immediately with a marked access of alacrity and courtesy. Mr. Marley would receive Mr. Carteret at once. So Mr. Carteret followed his guide down a half-glazed passage, which seemed to have been sliced off an already small back-yard, into a room which was almost filled by two solid writing-tables and one rickety stove. Here Mr. Marley spent his days, plump, dark, handsome, hook-nosed, with a pleasant smile and white, even teeth, a smooth man of fifty years, who had bloomed between the dry stove and draughty window like a fat orchid for comeliness. Here he sat day after day like a kindly spider, weaving legal subtleties, binding with all possible threads the landed interests of clients, putting out an occasional feeler for the not improbable descend-

ant of the long-lost great-great-aunt who might or might not be entitled to something under an ambiguous clause of an ancient ill-drawn will.

Mr. Marley felt a cheerful warmth at the sight of young Mr. Carteret, who represented such inspiring expectations. He glanced from him to the tin case on the dusty shelf, on which the name of "Carteret" showed white. There was no box more honored on the premises. It had always vexed the good lawyer that Sir Simon had not re-settled the real estate. If Sir Simon had a fault, it was a certain love of power. Now Mr. Marley, looking with clear, friendly eyes on this young landlord of the future, already saw in him the parent of a little tenant-for-life, the grandfather of a probable and desirable little tenant in tail male.

Alan, whose throat was dry, began a somewhat lame explanation of his visit. He had passed a feverish night, and, though he had grown cool as he

walked eastward with a fixed purpose, his pulses began to throb again in the narrow room, in the atmosphere of law. An unreasonable anger thrilled him. He had only said a few words about some inquiries which he wished to make when he stopped short. Mr. Marley was not unused to a difficulty of expression in his clients. After waiting a minute he said, "I am so glad you begin to take an interest in the property—princely, princely," he murmured further as the other remained silent. He was chuckling, smiling. "Your grandfather has so long wished——" he began again.

"Oh, damn my grandfather!" cried Alan Carteret with flashing eyes.

"What, your grandf——" gasped the lawyer; and he sat down suddenly on the chair which he had pushed forward for his visitor.

"I beg your pardon; I'm an ass to talk like that. What I want to know is about a place, an infernal hole called

‘Strangers’ Court.’ Do you know it? Does it belong to my grandfather?”

“Yes—undoubtedly—yes. It is a part—certainly it is a part of the London property.”

“And does he know the state it’s in?”

Mr. Marley had been completely upset by the unexpected fire and fury of the young man, but his profession had brought him into contact with many strange people, and he was not slow in mastering his emotions. He sat up in his chair with his wits once more about him. He took time before he answered, but his answer was clear to the point.

“It has been represented to Sir Simon,” he said. As Alan’s sole comment was an ambiguous grunt or growl, Mr. Marley presently continued with his fine conciliatory manner, with his most winning candour. “I will speak quite frankly to you,” he said. “Your grandfather——” Here he paused,

apprehensive; but Alan's lips were pressed together; there was no explosion. "Your grandfather," said the lawyer, "as he grows older is more and more impatient—it is unfortunately a very common case—of any suggestion which involves parting with—in fact, with money."

Light of wax candles, delicate savors of rare foods, oppressed the senses of the younger man, as if they were there present. His flash of anger, which had led him to speak improperly of his grandfather, had passed; but a grim determination held him in its stead. "But he gets money from the place," he said.

"Not directly from the tenants," said Mr. Marley; and with the air of a man who is showing the way out of an awkward place, he went on to explain that Sir Simon had let the houses of that unsavory court many years ago to certain persons, who let them to the present inhabitants. If the rents were

high, and the state of the houses left something to be desired, it was the fault of the lessees, who held from the Carteret estate.

"And why did he let to such men?" said Alan. "He takes money from them, who wring it from the poor for their foul rooms. Such money stinks. I'll have none of it, any way."

"My dear young friend," said the lawyer gravely, and after a pause pregnant with emphasis—"my dear young friend, if you offend your grandfather, you won't have any of it." He proceeded to point out to the hot youth that Sir Simon had the power to leave all his property, real and personal, to whomsoever he pleased; that Sir Simon, though in many ways so generous and charitable, had become with the lapse of years most sensitive on the side of prosperity, any questioning of which let loose on him visions of radicalism, socialism, communism, atheism, which roused him to fury; that his

temper was hotter than of yore and his will not a jot weaker; and, finally, that any one who tried a fall with him, would be thrown amid the applause of the world, by whom the old gentleman was universally respected.

"I shall have it out with him," said Alan, when the lawyer had made an end.

"Let me implore you not to," said the lawyer, bending forward and laying his hand for greater emphasis on the young man's knee. "Don't ruin your magnificent prospects."

Alan rose from his chair with an abrupt laugh. He shook the lawyer's hand; he begged his pardon if his language had been unseemly—he went out.

CHAPTER VI.

SIR SIMON CARTERET and his grandson were almost strangers. The little orphan had gone to a well-chosen school when nine years old, thence to Eton, and thence in due time to Oxford. His holidays had been for the most part spent under his grandfather's roof in town or country, or rather his nights had been so spent, for his days had passed in field or wood, on foot or horseback, under no roof less august than the vast canopy of heaven. He was more intimate with some of Sir Simon's game-keepers and grooms than with their master; although, when all is said, he was a person of few intima-

cies ; and when he had arrived at man's estate, there was but one whom he held a friend in the full sense of the word, and that was Tommy Seafeld. Locked somewhere in the depths of him he held fast to a high ideal of friendship, which made the light use of the word a frequent irritation to him. Macbeth's "troops of friends" seemed but a poor thing to hanker after, as vain as Timon's.

Sir Simon, for his part, had given more attention to the school reports of his grandson than to the boy himself. These reports had satisfied him, for they established the outlines of a youth more fit than his disappointing father to carry forward the traditions of the Carterets. They made it clear that the boy was no bookworm, that he was eminent for bodily strength and prowess in all games, that he took the lead among his fellows, as a Carteret should. The faults, which were reported not too often, were offences

against discipline, such as young Carterets had committed since the Conquest. Even the catastrophe which had put an end to the young man's Oxford career, had surprised his grandfather into a chuckle.

If any property were to be lightly used, it was the property of a learned body. This daring act was the sort of thing which Carterets grew out of, to be referred to with easy laughter as the wine went round in later years when the hot youth had taken his proper place in the county, in the country, in the Empire, perhaps. He might rise high if greatness were thrust upon him. For the rest, Sir Simon had been a generous guardian; he had given a large allowance and a larger freedom.

So when this youth, of whom he held a picture so inadequate, opened upon him in the agitator's vein—for such it seemed to the old man—he was flushed with amazement and sud-

den anger. "So I am unable to manage my own affairs, am I? I am in my dotage, am I? You young idiot, you—you——"

The redness of the old man's face was alarming; its contrast with the soft white hair was violent; his tongue babbled. There is nothing more shocking to the young than the unbridled passion of the old. Alan turned white as his grandfather flushed deeper. He looked at the old man with marked disfavor, but he kept silence.

"It's your hard work, I suppose," broke out Sir Simon, when he could find words again; "your studies at school and college that have fitted you to understand the rights of property, to teach your elders, to teach *me*."

"I've wasted my time; I know that," said Alan.

"And now you'd waste the property," cried his grandfather with harsh, unnatural laughter.

"Though I've been a fool, I can tell black from white."

"And I'm black?" He laughed again, but the laughter sounded in the young ears like the mere rush of furious anger. Anger had raised him from his seat; and he stood up, taller than his tall grandson, his largely-moulded face and broad, bent nose almost purple, his ponderous body shaking. "Learn your place!" he cried out with his great fist clenched; "leave me to manage my own affairs, or they'll never be your affairs—do you hear me?—never—never!"

"They never shall be. I'll take no more of your money."

"What!" roared Sir Simon.

"I'll touch no more of your money. I've some of my last allowance: you gave it to me without conditions, and I'll keep what's left, but I'll take no more." Alan spoke quietly, but clearly; there was a silence as they stood face to face. Looking in the

old man's eyes, Alan expected the silence to break in violent oaths, but instead there came again the horrid laughter.

"Are you cutting me off with a shilling?" Sir Simon cried in a shrill tone of mockery.

To this pleasantry the young man gave no answer. His grandfather grew quieter as he indulged himself in this new vein of irony. "You'll pipe to another tune before next quarter-day; you'll dance to my piping, you prig, you pauper ape, you——" He seemed at a loss for comparisons. There was a strong likeness, for all their unlikeness, between the kinsmen who stood opposite to each other. The jaws were alike, though that of the older man was obscured, disguised by flesh.

It was then that one of the footmen brought in a note. The intrusion of this every-day duty, of this third person, who may or may not have been conscious of unusual electricity in the

air, decreased the tension of the moods. Sir Simon reseated himself in his chair, and tested the steadiness of his hand as he read the note which was of no other importance. Alan stood silent, watching him as he read. When he looked up and said to the footman in his usual tone that there was no answer, Alan admired his grandfather as never before. It was an example; he would take it as that. "Good-bye," he said, when the door had closed behind the footman. "Psha!" said the old man in contempt of such childishness. Alan smiled grimly, and opened the door once more. He seemed to be opening the door of a new world.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM the presence of his grandfather, Alan went straight in search of his friend.

In any crisis, from days when they were both in jackets, it had been his wont to harass Tommy. It may be doubted if Tommy had ever helped him to a decision : but he had been the invariable accompaniment. The decisions had for the most part left Tommy gasping; and Alan, as he walked to Portland Place (he walked to save the price of a cab), pleased himself with a vision of Tommy gasping, as he had never gasped before. But it was not to be. Even the cheap luxury of as-

tounding Tommy was denied him. He learned at the familiar door that his friend had gone on a reading-party among the English lakes.

Alan turned away from his friend's house with a slight chill at the heart. It vexed him that he had not known where his friend was; it showed him how he had been netted, involved in the myriad tiny strings of a London idle world, absorbed by half a hundred nothings. Albeit, he began at once to compose in his head a brief letter to his absent friend; the letter would make Tommy open his mouth, though he would not be there to see. Thus busy with sentences he came to the most luxurious of his clubs, and ordered a dinner with more care than usual, counting the loose money in his pocket that he might be sure of paying for it. Awaiting the dinner-hour he chose a comfortable chair in a quiet corner and picked up a novel, famous at the moment, written by a

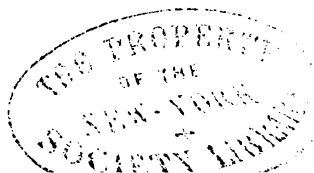
woman. He read carelessly, his mind flying from the printed page to pictures of the past, to fleeting plans of the future. From the clever tale he gained no more than the impression, frequent to him, that women were a mere danger to men, a source of weakness to men. In his boyhood at Eton and Oxford he had scarcely seen these disturbing creatures. At home, if his grandfather's stately residences had been home to him, he had lived in men's houses, where women were only portraits on the wall, miniatures on the drawing-room table, prints in old books of beauty. His mind, unusually alert under a new excitement, flashed from the fair Mrs. Chippenham to the girl with the hungry face in the mean room up Strangers' Court. An adventurer must guard himself from women. An adventurer! How the word spake close to his heart and warmed his blood! Out he would go, out to the enchanted world of bold

resolve, of high endeavor. There he might prove himself a man. He laid aside the book, in which life seemed to go on in a series of scented boudoirs, and gave a more undivided attention to his dinner. When he had made an end of his lonely meal and of his pint of best champagne, he looked in for a time at a popular music-hall; and, when he felt sure that his grandfather had gone to bed, he went home, let himself in with his latchkey and went quietly up-stairs to his own room. There he sat down with his candles and made some calculations. Since the beginning of the year he had had an account with Sir Simon's bankers. He studied his cheque-book with some care, did some simple sums on the back of an envelope, and decided that there must be at least two hundred and fifty pounds to his credit at the bank. When he had assured himself of this, he sat back in his chair and breathed more freely. Then he went

to his old bureau, a cupboard of promiscuous memories, which he had imported from his Eton tutors, and on the desk-flap of which the name of Carteret had been deeply burned with a poker. He withdrew from this honored receptacle, which touched him, as he held the lid, with sudden unprecedented emotion, a slim bundle of bank-notes. From out this ancient "burry," as from a Pandora's box, innumerable winged, whispering sprites swarmed on a sudden about him, touching his heart, tempting his will; ancient associations, prejudices, wooings of half-forgotten friendships, pleasures of the old life. It was like the last assault of spirits. Why not yield? What pleasures, even what chances of useful work lay at his hand? A mere word to his grandfather, or no word at all? He had only to get up to-morrow morning as usual, forgetful of the dreams of the fantastic night. This would be sensible conduct, and

Tommy would approve it with cordiality. So Alan stood, with the lid of the desk in one hand and his last bank-notes in the other. Then he shut the lid firmly and passed his hand with a caress over the burnt name of "Carteret." It was farewell to his childhood. Now he must think as a man. He counted the few notes. Then he felt in all his pockets with careful finger, and presently made three heaps, the first exceeding small, of gold, silver and copper. Notes and coin together were enough to take him whither he meant to go. Then he returned again to his cheque-book, and wrote a cheque payable to T. Seafeld for £250. This he laid on one side, while he gave himself to the composition of the letter in which it was to be enclosed.

The letter, which was destined to amaze the sagacious Tommy, was clear and brief. It began with full directions how Tommy was to find "Strangers'



Court," and the mother and daughter, who lived on the third floor of No. 7. "I don't know their names," he wrote, "but you will know them because they are ladies, and because the mother was knocked down by a coach—my coach. You must make them agree that you shall use the enclosed cheque for their good; you must get them decent lodgings, and help them to a new start. The girl is a little devil; she will throw it in your face, but you must persuade her. You can tell her that it is conscience money (for Strangers' Court is on the Carteret estate), or a sop lest I should be sued for running over her mother, or a loan, or what you will; only use the money for them. I know you can do it, or I could not go off happy. I am going off. I have had a royal row with my grandfather, and have chucked Carteret ultimus. If I did not seize this chance of freedom and go, all that I have said again and again to you of my boredom at being

tied down to a line of life, of having to do year after year what is expected of the future heir, would be rot and humbug. But I always meant it; and now I have told my grandfather too, and all the fat is in the fire, as you may well suppose. You must not mind. You are the only creature I really mind leaving. I will write to you some day when I have got a foothold. Meanwhile, don't fret about me, dear old chap, and see to those poor women for the sake of yours ever, Alan."

Alan slept for three hours, rose and dressed himself, placed his scanty store of notes and coins in different pockets of his old shooting-clothes, put the letter for Tommy stamped and ready for the post in the outside pocket of his covert-coat, went without noise down the thickly-carpeted stairs, laid his latch-key on the hall table, unbolted the front door, and met full in the face the freshness, the radiance of dawn. He breathed deep with joy.

CHAPTER VIII.

ALAN, last of the Carterets, tramping onward and upward in a pass of the Rocky Mountains, strong and healthy, and without a cent, felt his heart light as never before in all the pleasures and excitements of his boyhood. The look of worry had vanished from his brows and eyes; he had shaken himself free of the fetters of gold; he drew in liberty with the keen, exultant air. The chief luxuries cost nothing, and penniless, this vagabond might breathe purity, vigor, joy. He, too, with Emerson, asked but health and a day—and how ridiculous the pomp of kings! The growing

boy, the young man with his foot at the door of life, had guessed but rarely what was the matter with him. He had been often angry with himself for his unreasonable discontent. But at the bottom of his heart had moved dimly but constantly an impulse to test his dawning manhood, which on its other side was a sense of unfairness that the battle of life was made too easy for him. Was life a race? If so, was this life's handicap? To surpass those who started by his side, his idle, easy mates at school and college, made no sufficient call upon his energies; while, as to these other youths, without money, without family influence, with these it was a shame to compete; it was accepting too much start. If he had scorned them often in their ill-made clothes, he had envied them at other times, beholding them afar off, eager, laborious, with no doubts as to their duties in life. And so to this youth, irritable amid the down and

diamonds, like the princess on the fabled feather-bed, had come the crisis, the tide in the affairs of a man. Ah, how glad he was that he had seized his chance, flung himself on the full tide! He had shaken himself free of his advantages, which hampered him. He had come out of the perfumed rooms into the cheap air of heaven. He did that which was right in his own eyes; not that which was expected of him. He had seen that after all it was a simple matter to live. Already he had tried his strength and had found himself so far equal to the task. He had worked all the winter in Chicago, and had earned his bread as an unskilled laborer. He had got to the very flat of the world; he had had nothing to offer but his health, strength, and honesty. Now, when spring came, with her old prompting to pilgrimage, he had spent his scanty savings on a fare to Colorado, and up the rising pass he went, confident and

calm, breathing more quickly in the keen, exciting air. His blood tingled; his feet were winged; he heard the little stream run singing down to meet him, unseen in passing, babbling beneath the underwood. He seemed alone in a new-made world of his own; only the empty meat-tins, which bordered the track, all silver in the sun, spoke of the common road, the track of wayfarers. His eyes were raised from the shining meat-tins to the sun in heaven, from the dust of the road to the pure heights of pathless snow cut clear against the pale blue, far-off sky. It was clean; too clean, perhaps, for the landscape-painter, but like fairy wine to youth intent on deeds. He looked on the peaks, all radiant with sun-struck snow, and his heart was singing with the wayside brook.

Alan Carteret had dropped the "et" in Chicago. A fanciful grammarian might say that he had snapped here-with the conjunction with his ancient

home. It was as Alan Carter that he came to Colorado to join a gang of navvies who were helping to hurry a little audacious railway up a cañon to the heights of the mountain. He felt sure of work, for hands were wanted. They were busy times, a year of enterprise and prosperity. There had been great discoveries of silver in the high places; a city of brand-new boards had sprung into being ten thousand feet or more above the level of the sea; and the little railroad was climbing thither with a promise of abundant freight. But Alan Carter had yet to find how hard it is to stand on the dead level of humanity. He thought that he had shaken off the last distinguishing remnants of caste; but on the very first morning, when he awoke as a young navvy in the mountains, he was rudely awakened too from his certainty of equality with his new mates. A small group of them, bare to the waist in the cold air of dawn, were washing their

faces, chests and arms with great haste, and some splashing. They had come out to the pumps and the keenness of the morning, and were glad to hurry back into their shirts and jackets. But before he donned his own upper garments, Alan drew from an inner pocket a toothbrush, which he wetted in the clear bright water and used with vigor. Immediately he was aware of the arrested notice of some of his mates, and conscious, with the toothbrush yet in his mouth, of an atmosphere of disapproval. Yet nothing was said; and at the noontide rest he had forgotten the matter, when to his surprise he was addressed formally on the subject. He had been guilty, it seemed, of "putting on frills," which ranked only second to robbery in the simple code of the higher parts of Colorado. Alan, perhaps a little curtly, replied that it was a life-long habit, that he could not forego it, that it hurt nobody else.

After a pause a voice said slowly, "I guess you'll hev to give it up."

"Oh, no," said Alan, flushing.

"Then you'll hev to fight for it."

"To fight for it?" cried Alan.

"Thet's so," said the other, and spat as if for emphasis. He then rose and went to another group, who were reposing not far off, and returned with a long-armed slouching giant, who followed him with an incongruous air of meekness, smiling rather shyly.

"Now," said the spokesman, when he had come back to Alan, "you must give up that little darned thing, or you must fight Jeff."

Alan had never found himself in a position more absurd or more perplexing. He was angry; he measured Jeff with anxious, irritated eyes. And now the members of the other group came across to them, and others from farther off; a scent of sport was in the air. "It's absurd," said Alan, "and

it's ridiculous tyranny. What is it to you if I use a toothbrush?"

"It's puttin' on frills," said a bystander, and a murmur of approval was heard from the ring.

"Give it up," said another.

"No," said Alan.

"Then here's Jeff."

"Do you mean to make me fight for such rot?" asked Alan of Jeff. Jeff looked round with an amiable grin; he had an air of sublime indifference. "I can't give up my toothbrush, any way," said Alan. He then saw the young giant, still smiling in a peaceful manner, put up his big fists; he felt that he must fight; he wished with all his heart that among his studies as an athlete he had learned to box. He was quite aware of his little skill; and was aware too, that, though he was strong and active, he was no match in power for the long-limbed, slouching man who opposed him. However, he must act since words were vain.

Springing in, he struck Jeff a smart blow on the right cheek-bone, and the next moment found himself flat. He leapt up and rushed in; he was furious; the Carteret jaw was fixed. His new mates were delighted with his courage, though they made no clamor about it. The newcomer would show them sport at least. Alan felt that his one advantage was greater agility. He tried to jump in within the other's guard, and get back before the mighty arm could get into action; and for the next few minutes his tactics seemed successful; he planted two or three shrewd blows upon the placid visage opposed to him; he began to feel the joy of battle, to long ardently that he knew a little more about it, even to see a faint hope of final victory. But it was not to be. Once more he sprang in and struck his foe a straight blow on the chin; but, ere he could get out of reach again, the other's long right arm came home on the side of his head

like a battering-ram, and he fell like a dead man on the road. When he looked up dazed and sick, he looked into the kindly face of the young giant, who was holding his head on his knee, and mopping it with a wet cloth. "You hev plenty of sand," said Jeff: "I like you. You shall use your tooth-cleaner all day if you like. I'll see to thet."

So Alan Carter found a useful friend, and continued to enjoy the final luxury, which he had found himself unable to forego. Nor was there ever seen a finer courtesy than that of Jeff, who showed such respect and admiration for his new friend, that when Alan felt the sting of having been laid out by one of little culture, he had only to look in Jeff's face to feel shame of his petty pride.

Not much later, Alan and Jeff were standing one evening on the side of the long shallow depression, which lay among the topmost peaks of the Rocky

Mountains, and held the new city of Leadville. The city was but two years old, just out of its canvas baby-clothes. It lay in the clear cool light, all yellow planks of deal and dusty road ; and all around it on the slopes were holes and mounds of earth thrown out by the seekers of silver. Alan had been fired by the prevailing ardor, and he had persuaded Jeff, who was easily persuaded by him, to leave the little railroad still struggling upward from below and to come on before it to the new city of promise. The two friends stood above and beyond the utmost houses of the place, looking with a silence, which seemed to suit the evening hour, at a shed of clean pine-boards which had been lately built, and which displayed in plain black letters on its front the name of a mine.

Jeff stood contemplative, his long arms hanging straight by his side ; Alan's face showed the slight wrinkle between the brows, which had been so

common in his youth ; and it was Alan who spoke first.

"They tell me," he said, "that that was just a hole in the ground, like any other, last summer ; and now it's worth a million."

"Dollars," said Jeff. "I guess you still reckon in British gold. And, jest look at all these holes that aren't worth a cent." He moved his long arm round the spacious scene with a large gesture.

"It'll be a fine life, any way," said Alan, "good work, good air, sleep in a tent. I'm sure I shall like it."

"That's so," said Jeff, "health, hope and a friend." He laid a large hand on Alan's arm.

Alan started at his touch. "You think me an ass," he said quickly, "for going after money again ; but I like this ; it's a fair field and no favor, that's what I like ; and if luck comes our way we'll take it and be thankful. It's the seeking that will be the fun ;

and, if we find this 'pay dirt' of yours in sufficient quantities, why——"

"Well?" asked Jeff slowly.

"Probably we sha'n't," said Alan;
"so it don't matter."

Part II.

CHAPTER I.

IT was one of Mrs. Grosshart's best evenings, and that is no small distinction for an evening. It was a midnight evening, all electricity in lights and temperaments, sparkling with real diamonds, and with wit less real, roaring softly with a babble of words, crackling with frequent laughter. The rooms were so large that even cartloads of flowers and spreading palms left room for people. And people were there, male and female, divers people. The idea of Mrs. Grosshart's parties was informality, a chance gath-

ering of her many friends, who belonged to various sets ; but to harmonize the many elements, to fill without over-filling her large spaces must have needed more thought and care than that incomparable hostess allowed to appear. Her husband's abnormal wealth and his many interests, which spread tentatively abroad like the arms of an octopus, had brought him many acquaintances in many circles ; and from these raw materials his wife with a fine art wove her social tissues, her cloth of gold and meaner stuffs, gorgeous, refulgent, and in parts warranted to wear. On this evening, which was one of her best, there were enough and not too many stars of the night. There was the duchess who longed to be an actress, and the actress who was suspected of being a duchess. There was the young painter Hubert Hobart, too fastidious to paint, but known to be feeling after a new medium in which he could express himself.

Meanwhile he arranged his hair with care upon his clean-cut forehead and invented and polished ironical praises of Academicians. These, with a handful of gentlemen at home for a fortnight from Rhodesia, were the chief magnets of the party. But more than by any or all of these, the interest of the crowd was drawn by Millicent Archer. Tall, serious, superb, with her dark eyes full of dreams, she seemed to hold her unusual beauty as a thing of naught. It was on her cleverness that she valued herself. Her fame was very new: she was a brand-new lioness; she had the grace of a panther. She was sitting beside a palm-tree, and Hubert Hobart, cool and incisive, talked to her. He often said in his fine moments of calculated expansion that when he had found his medium she should be his first model. Delicate observer as he was, he was not much slower than an ordinary man in noticing that the triumphant lady

was not listening to his speeches. He stopped, contemplative of her with his studied smile; and conscious after a minute or two of the cessation of something, she raised her lambent eyes with a faint interest. Meeting his subtle smile she smiled also and said, "Who is he?"

"Who is who?"

"That man—there—opposite—with the broad shoulders?"

"Surely *you* don't care for shoulders—men's? So fatiguing." Hubert shrugged his own, which were not excessive. "Why *can* you want to know who *that* is?" he asked further.

"Because he stares so."

"If you grow curious about every man who stares at you, you will become a sort of biographical dictionary. Why don't you begin with me?"

"I know all about you; it's nothing. Besides, you said 'men.'"

"You *are* unkind," he said, still smiling. "As for him, his coat is

more interesting. Where does one get misfits like that? They have a character."

"Go and find out who he is," said Miss Archer: "ask Grosshart."

Hubert Hobart slipped away from her with his careful walk; he knew how to cross a room if ever man knew; and he presently returned to her with the same action. "He is just what you would expect," he said—"a certain Carter—English or American—no points—only shoulders and a Kent Road coat—sent over on business to Grossy; not even a millionaire."

"What business?" she asked.

"Oh, now don't!" said Hubert. "If you talk business I shall die."

"Another good reason for talking business. Go and tell Grosshart I want him to introduce the man."

"The shoulders?"

"Yes. Go."

It is true that Alan had stared. He had not been to a party for ten

years. He knew nobody but his host, to whom he had come on business. He did not recognize one of all these faces.

In the moments now and then when he thought of himself, he was a little embarrassed for the first time by the thought that he was in England as somebody else. He had been "Carter" for ten years; as "Carter" he was known to an increasing circle in Colorado; and when he had accepted a mission to Mr. Grosshart at an hour's notice, the question of his name had not even occurred to him. He had accepted the great financier's invitation to come to his wife's party; and here in this hum and stir of a nervous society Carteret seemed to wake in him and to gaze on the vision of faces for some familiar looks. Still he was but little self-conscious. He stood by the wall and stared like a cowboy at the circus; he did not even think of his coat, though (and this is a tribute

to the fine observation of the young artist, Hubert Hobart) he had bought it ready-made that afternoon in the Tottenham Court Road.

As Alan stood staring, his host came to him, dark, abrupt, saturnine, and said that he would introduce him to the lady at whom he had stared the most.

Mr. Grosshart did not wait for his agreement; he was a peremptory person, and Alan had no choice but to follow him across the room. He felt the folly of a dusky blush and frowned like a man at this boyish embarrassment.

Miss Archer looked up at him with her dark eyes and patted the sofa at her side, and he sat down rather heavily upon it. Then after a tug at the back of his coat he looked at her, as if for speech.

"You know that I sent for you?" she asked.

"No," said Alan. "What for?"

"You looked different," she said.

"I daresay," he said. "I have been in the wilds for ten years."

"And have come back like Ulysses," said she. "Has Troy fallen? I don't mean Troy, N. Y."

"What do you know about 'Troy, N. Y.'?" asked Alan with a grin. This imperious beautiful dark lady amused him.

"Where were your wilds?" asked she and, without waiting for an answer, "What sent you there? A woman?"

"No," said Alan, answering the last of the string.

"And what brought you back?" she asked.

"I was sent from Colorado to have a talk with Mr. Grosshart."

"From Colorado!" she said with quicker interest. "Then tell me about Denver traffic! Is there a real improvement?"

Alan started in his cushioned place,

and looked at her with keener scrutiny.

"Why should *you* care about 'Denvers' and such things?" he asked.

"Would you limit us to bonnets?" she asked darkly; and, after a moment, turning to him and smiling brightly she asked again—"What did you take me for? Quick! the truth!"

"An actress," he blurted out.

"Ah! I might have guessed it: I seemed to you affected, unnatural, all calculated airs."

"No," he said slowly and thoughtfully; "it wasn't that. I saw you walk down the room when you first came in. You did it differently, rather better than——"

"Than a lady?"

"No," he said crossly and frowning. "I think we had better not talk about you."

"You don't find it interesting?"

"Well," said he slowly (and there was distinctly a slightly American

drawl in the word), "I have no practice in this sort of talk. I like to think before I speak and to try to be accurate."

"To tell the truth?" she said with round eyes. "Then tell me the truth about Denver Seconds."

Vexation and amusement contended in Alan's sunburnt face as her candid eyes read it with the utmost gravity.

"But why do you care?" he asked.

"Because I've been buying them."

"You?"

"I. Have you any objection?"

"I have no right to make any."

"Then answer my question."

"I think they'll go higher," he said.

"Thanks!" she said. "That'll do for to-day. But you'll tell me more; you'll come and see me to-morrow—to tea."

Alan felt as if his wits were the slowest in the world. He was slowly gathering them in, preparatory to an answer, when she laughed and said,—

"I'll write my address." She took his wrist firmly between a delicate finger and thumb, drew it deftly towards her so that the same motion drew his cuff further from his sleeve, and with a little pencil fastened to her bracelet wrote an address upon the cuff. "It is a flat," she said; "high, but not so high as Leadville. Good-night."

She shook the hand when she had dropped the wrist and rose so quickly that she left Allan seated on the low sofa, staring at his cuff. He felt as if he had been taken possession of, branded like a stray pony. For a man so dominant as he the feeling was strange, and it made him smile to think that he had taken orders from that weak creature, a woman. He shook himself, rose alertly from his place, and went in search of his host. He found Mr. Grosshart yawning without concealment at the top of his staircase, and asked who the lady was to

whom he had been introduced. "Millicent Archer," said Mr. Grosshart curtly. He was curt to most people, and he had found in this new acquaintance an absence of deference which was startling. Most persons desiring his financial support approached him as if he were the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket. The stones of the dull court in which he reigned were worn by the approaches of these suppliants. The erect bearing of this stalwart ambassador from Colorado, combined with an unusual air of candor, impressed the great financier more than he would have cared to admit even to himself. He had not yet decided if Alan were merely trustworthy or if he had been chosen by his fellows of the syndicate for the fine power of deception which lay in that air and manner of frankness and independence. He had not decided how to treat this new ambassador; in the meantime he certainly did not miti-

gate in his favor his usual curtness, which Alan, who had a natural talent for bluntness, encountered in kind.

"Is she a stock-jobber or what?" asked Alan.

"Amateur," said the great professional.

"A female amateur stock-jobber! Is that common with your ladies now?"

"All women are gamblers," said Mr. Grosshart, with the faintest of smiles, "but almost all funky."

"And she—Miss Archer is bold?"

"Too bold."

He turned on his heel, and so turning almost trod on the pointed toes of Mr. Hubert Hobart, who had been studying his large back.

Hubert being thus confronted with Mr. Carter, looked at him, with his trim head on one side, like a sharp-billed bird.

"You were talking of Miss Archer," he said, with a fine shade of apology in

his tone for addressing him without an introduction. "You will find her the most interesting woman of the hour, even of the day. She is sensitive to the slightest variations. For the time she uses this amazing temperament in the City; she is like a highly sensitive tape: she feels the imminent fluctuation of stocks. Of course *I* wish that she would dedicate her gift to art."

"Oh," said Alan rather lamely, and looking with puzzled brows at this clean-cut, confident youth.

"But after all," said Mr. Hubert more confidently, "who knows? If we could read aright those rhythms of the market, the finest harmonies may be there for the instructed ear. This hyper-delicate organism may detect the pulses of a diviner melody in Throgmorton Street. Passion and pain are there, and the music of the automatic recorders. Who knows?"

He seemed to expect some sort of answer, and Alan, frowning down upon

him, said, "I am afraid I don't follow you."

"How should you? Nobody does. I am all my party; I am one; that is what is so encouraging."

"You are a friend of this lady?" asked Alan, abruptly; "you know her well?"

"She is good enough to invest my little moneys for me," said Mr. Hubert Hobart.

CHAPTER II.

IT was Alan's first holiday for ten years. A holiday indeed it seemed to him, though he was on a business mission. He had time to stretch himself, and let his eyes wander from the work which was under his nose, and look above and about him, to consider himself. One thing was very clear to him—the ten years of hard work had been far happier than the few fat years between his school-days and his choice of a hungry life. Far happier the toilsome days and the nights of sound sleep. He had given up happiness and found it. On the morning after the Grossharts' party he was

roaming about with such thoughts as these, feeling profoundly idle, tasting the first freshness of the summer day. His workman's habits had brought him betimes into the street. He had an appointment with Mr. Grosshart in the City, but, though it was an early appointment for the business world, some hours must be beguiled ere he went City-ward. He took coffee at a coffee-stall. He went smiling through the streets; Carteret seemed to be beside him; he had leapt into being again at the old familiar sight of London; he suggested criticisms of Carter. Chance led Alan into a street which he recognized in a sudden flash, which seemed to show him also his shining coach of other days as if it were there, his two grooms of scrupulous rigidity. The boredom of that past time rolled back on him with the phantom wheels; for the moment he felt it all again: he was irritated by those two passive figures in livery; again he flicked the

nervous leader as a vent to vexation. Then he felt himself planted firmly on his feet, Alan Carter, with enough and not too much; he felt his muscles move in his sleeves; he looked at his right hand, widened somewhat and hard in the palm. Moving onward he found himself at a corner; he stopped almost without intention: it was the corner of "Strangers' Court."

He stood looking into the cool shadow of Strangers' Court. It looked pleasant. It had been swept and garnished. Yes; there was no doubt about that. He laughed rather oddly, rather grimly. What a fool he would seem to any one who knew all his folly—to Carteret ultimus, for instance! He had been toiling for daily wage; then digging for scanty, evasive silver as a prospector, at last saving a little; working hard day after day, and all because this little unimportant court was temporarily out of repair. For lack of a little paint and paper, and some tinker-

ing of drains, perhaps, he had thrown away a fortune. If anybody were eager to lock him up, here were adequate evidences of mental derangement. He had buried himself in Colorado, while his grandfather was setting all agencies in motion to discover him in Africa. He had read of his grandfather's death in a Western newspaper, which had given a picturesque but fairly true account of his own disappearance, and, copying from the English journal, which had shown the usual desire to have everything settled and accounted for, had gone on to say that his own death was as good as certain. Certain at least it was that some Englishman had been killed by a native spear beyond the Zambesi, and what more likely than that should be this Alan Carteret, of whom it was more comfortable to think as dead than demented? Dead or alive, this eccentric youth had forfeited the Carteret fortune ; for his grandfather, failing to find

him or trace of him, had left all his property, real and personal, to the admirable Moseley-Carterets, whom all men congratulated so zealously on their unexpected good fortune.

So Alan, seated in the door of his prospector's tent, had accepted himself as dead. Only now, when again he trod the hot pavement of London, his old self showed odd signs of life. He turned away from Strangers' Court, and went and looked at the big house which had been his London home. He stood opposite the front door through which he had stepped into a new world. The whole imposing front of the mansion was gay with flowers. It had a softer and more radiant air than in the days of old Sir Simon. Mrs. Moseley-Carteret was a lover of light and blossom. This palace should have been Alan's. Alan stared at it wondering. Had he been an egregious ass? He laughed as he asked himself the question. Perhaps

he was the only man who would answer No. Perhaps he was in the minority of one like the precious young painter of the night before. Here was a solid sign, this freehold mansion, rich in varied bloom, of all that he had given up. And certainly the thing which had made him give it up seemed to this travelled, thoughtful man far smaller than before. He knew now that the question was not so simple; he saw it in more and wider relations. If, for instance, all the slums of London were made attractive, would any young men be left in the country villages? Perhaps it was more important to make village life more tempting, or to prevent the further fall of silver, or to reduce the beer-shops by half. Perhaps he would have done better to secure his wealth and influence, and then aim at improvements. Did he regret his hasty action, his quarrel with his grandfather, his excursion into the unknown? No. He was sure of

that. He felt twice the man for it ; he was equal to his fate ; he had had the training of life. If his outlook on life had been narrow when he threw away the encumbrances to which he had been born, he did not think it false. He had chosen by aid of the best lights which he had then. He did not regret his choice ; only he felt more lonely than he had felt since the morning after his departure from this stately massive building which had been his home. In this new-found leisure, and on the old familiar pavement, thoughts of former companions came about him—of the careless, light young men whom the chances of propinquity and like age had thrust against him, comrades in games and sport ; and among these one face with anxious eye turned upon him—the face of his friend, Tommy Seafeld. After a year's absence he had written to Tommy, to tell him that he was strong and well, and wanted nothing. But he

had given no clue to his whereabouts. He knew Tommy ; he knew him capable of coming after him at the risk of the loss of briefs and of all his future. Then the years had passed, flowing by in a full stream, and he had thought less of Tommy, till here he stood and realized, with a sort of gasp, that he did not know if his friend were alive or dead. When this thought had come back to him again and again, when he stood idly musing and staring at his former home, on a sudden, another thought succeeded it like a flash. What was he doing? What of his embassy? Had he come from Colorado to stand mooning by daylight? He pulled out his watch, put it back in a moment, called a hansom, and gave the cabman the address of Mr. Grosshart's firm in the City. Ten years of punctuality had not saved him from being late for an appointment. This, surely, was that Carteret of former days, who missed chapels

and lectures, and beheld the flight of time with a sublime indifference. Had the last of the Carterets, not Moseley, awakened to life again on the pavement? Perhaps the cabman was driving his full complement, though he did not know it.

If Carteret was in the cab and overpaid the driver, it was Carter who, closeted with Mr. Grosshart, described with terse force the chances of the mines, which wanted British capital for their development. He could answer for the presence of silver in sufficient quantities to make them pay at the present price of silver. If that price dropped further, the question could be answered with less confidence. What amount of force the silver party in America could bring to bear upon the Legislature was a question which interested Mr. Grosshart more keenly than the needs of a small group of miners. His object was to learn from Alan the opinions of the

strong men of Colorado, without committing himself to a promise to put money into the mines, which Alan advocated. Now this ambassador told the plain truth as plainly as he could ; but the financier was not in the habit of believing statements which were not extracted by artifice or given for an obvious consideration. So the interview ended with no definite result. Mr. Grosshart regarded Alan as one of the most cunning men with whom he had ever dealt ; he even thought that he had been a quarter of an hour late by design to increase his importance, to suggest indifference ; while Alan, having laid the case before Mr. Grosshart as clearly as he could, departed with a lower opinion of a man who could not make up his mind with all the facts before him, and a full hour's discussion.

Alan rose at last, bored by waste of breath, for such it seemed to him, and agreed with an ill grace to a second

interview on a later day. "I've really no more to say," he said: "the thing is plain enough; it's there to take or leave." But to this parting speech the great financier only replied by a long look and a faint, enigmatic smile. He had taken the measure of this Mr. Carter for life, and he never ceased to regard him as the most diplomatic, and even the most dodgy of men.

Alan, stepping westward from the business quarter, felt the pangs of a healthy hunger; he had passed the hour of workmen's dinner. So he made a good meal in one of the taverns which feed the hungry lawyers near Temple Bar, and then set forth on a quest which touched him with a keener anxiety than his business of the morning. He had forgotten the number of Tommy's London home, but he thought that he could find the street and the house. Nor did he trust his memory too far, for, after but slight fault, he found himself standing

at the door, and for the moment afraid to put his hand upon the bell. His heart [was thumping; he was amazed by his weakness. When he had rung it seemed long before the door was opened.

"Does Mr. Seafeld live here?" he asked.

The butler, whose face was strange, seemed strangely slow of speech to those anxious ears.

"Yes, sir," he said, as if this were a common-place caller from round the corner.

"And Tommy—Mr. Thomas—Mr. Thomas Seafeld?"

He seemed to himself to be asking questions in a series of gasps; but the butler answered with no appearance of wonder.

"Mr. Thomas is still in Africa," he answered.

"In Africa! for his health?"

"Oh, no, sir; Mr. Thomas enjoys good health, sir."

He looked at Alan, considering if he should favor him with further information. His weakness was unnecessary talk; he had been rebuked too often for gossiping at the door. But here was a civil, honest gentleman who looked eager; he described Alan to himself as a "Colonial" or a "cricketer." He yielded to the temptation to dilate.

"You see, sir," he said, "it was like this. Our young gentleman went out to the Cape in pursuot of a madman."

"A madman?"

"Yes, sir, a poor gentleman who would have come into a large fortune; only he went off his chump, so to speak sir, and Mr. Seafeld junior, who was a great friend of his, went off to Africa to look for him."

"A madman," said Alan again, but more softly.

"There was no doubt about that, sir."

"Of course not," said Alan; "and

has your young gentleman been looking for the madman ever since?"

"No, no sir," said the man, smiling; "he couldn't find out anything. But he had an offer from a firm of lawyers at what they call the Cape. Did I tell you Mr. Thomas was a lawyer?"

"I knew it," said Alan. "And so he stayed out there?"

"He had to come back for a bit, sir; you see, there was another affair. He'd been left to look after——"

Here a lady's voice was heard from the first floor. "Huggins, is there a door open anywhere? I never felt such a draught."

Huggins, with a slow bow full of meaning, closed the front door very softly in Alan's face. Alan stood on the doorstep a few minutes. He had heard all that he needed to know. Tommy was pursuing law at the Cape and he, Alan, was mad.

CHAPTER III.

ONE of the close students of Millicent Archer—and there were not a few who studied or affected to study that amazing lady—would have noticed about teatime signs of impatience, almost of anger. She regarded her invitations as privileges. Now the teatable had been garnished for at least a quarter of an hour, and the bidden man was not there. That was unusual. The question arose with insistence if he had appreciated his privilege as he should. The room in which the impatient lady dwelt was lightly furnished and adorned and pleasant in this summer weather. Indeed, it was the more

pleasant during this unusual heat from its bareness, as of a man's den, and from its position high up in the air. Through the French windows came a faint breeze, and from the light iron balcony—one of the innumerable balconies which give many of these vast piles of flats the appearance of being decorated with fancy fenders—the privileged visitor might look down upon the tops of faintly-stirred trees, and far below the misty green see busses crawling like gaudy beetles on the road, and tiny black hats creeping on mere threads of pavement.

But where was the privileged visitor? Miss Archer, coming in from the balcony, glanced quickly at the clock on the mantelpiece, and then with rebuke at the meek little lady seated at the tea-table. "This is intolerable," she said.

"The heat, dear?" asked Miss Bunney.

"No. The man."

The electric bell sounded, and in a minute the white-capped maid announced "Mr. Carter."

"I thought you weren't coming," said Miss Archer sharply.

"I almost didn't," said Alan with a frown.

"Were you afraid?" she asked; and quickly added, "You don't look like a coward."

"No more than most men," said Alan with a grin at her abruptness, which set him at his ease.

"Put your hat there, and for goodness' sake sit down. It makes me hot to see you stand there, and you don't fit the room; you're too big."

Alan muttered that he was very sorry. He seated himself in a large leather chair. Then presently he said, "I daresay I am afraid of women. In the wilds there were none—none of any account."

"You needn't take me for a woman," she said; "it bores me. I demand to

be talked to as if I were a man. I'm unsexed."

Alan grunted; he didn't like the expression.

"Here is the feminine element," she continued. "She will give you tea, as the female element should. Did I introduce you? It is Alma Bunney, who is good enough to live with me."

"It is you who are good enough," cried out Alma Bunney, nervously tinkling among the teacups. "Oh, Mr. Carter, if you only knew!"

She subsided into murmurs.

"Tell him!" said Miss Archer; "tell him and get it over! All my friends have to hear a list of virtues from Alma. They pass by that; it takes twenty minutes." She consulted the watch which she wore in a plain bracelet on her wrist. "I'll go out till it's over."

She moved towards the door.

"Millicent!" cried out Miss Bunney, "what *are* you doing?"

"I forgot the proprieties," said Millicent; "I must stay and do chaperon. But Alma can be trusted, really; she's not like her books. Have you read her books?"

"I'm afraid——" began Alan, feeling clumsy; "I've read nothing, you know."

"You must ask for Alma's books, but don't read them. They are atrocious."

"Millicent!" cried the lady author.

"Atrocious. But it's all in her pen. She can't help being good, try as she will. Poor dear! She dreams of absinthe and nibbles a lettuce. Don't read her or you'll be afraid to come here."

"Mr. Carter!" said Miss Bunney, plaintively. She offered him a cup of tea with eyes full of protestation.

"She doesn't put anything in it," said Millicent. "Her heroines would slip in poison and drink it themselves at the last moment."

"I'm not afraid," said Alan, manfully; and he drained the doubtful cup.

"It's one of her naughty, naughty days," said Alma Bunney, shaking her head at him.

"And now tell me," said Miss Archer, "did you square Grossy?"

"What?"

"Will he come in? Will he take a hand in your deal? Isn't that the way to talk in the West?"

"Not much," said Alan. He looked at this fascinating and bewildering lady with a steady gaze. He seemed to himself so slow of wit. "Do you really care about business and such things?"

She nodded assent.

"But why do you care?" he asked.

"For money, money, money!" She snapped the word at him like three shots of a revolver. They shocked him. He saw her eyes shining with no fictitious meaning. Now at least she was not in jest.

"But why do you want money?"

"Have you ever been without it?" she asked, by way of answer. "Then you'd know. What an idiotic question!" she added after a pause. "Why do you want money?" She mimicked his tone with the keenest scorn. He kept silence, looking moodily at her. She waited for him to speak, was vexed with his silence, desired eagerly to annoy him more. "I've had to make my money," she said, with a provoking laugh, "my little all—the little flat and the little tea."

"And little me," said Alma Bunney softly. "She took me——" she continued, turning her round eyes on Alan.

"Stop!" said Miss Archer. "The twenty minutes is postponed. I want to know about silver. Till now," she continued to Alan, "I've done nothing—mere hole-and-corner affairs; but I am tired of little things, little chances, little flats, little teas, little Bunneys. I have embarked on a campaign, a

combination ; I am going to run a big risk, and win a big prize."

She jumped up as if to cure her restlessness and moved about ; her eyes gleamed, her cheek flushed.

"You'll be broke," said Alan curtly.

"No," she cried out ; "I have faith in my star."

"Ah, yes," murmured Alma to the teaspoons ; "her star."

"There is only one thing which can upset me," said Miss Archer, standing still before Alan, and looking down at him keenly, "a further fall in silver. I rest my campaign on the belief that silver has touched bottom ; that, either by an International agreement, or by immediate large discoveries of gold, the price of silver must rise, or rather, cannot fall lower."

"And if there is a further fall in silver?" Alan asked huskily.

She tossed her arms in the air with an exquisite, a delightful gesture, as if she whistled such chances down the

wind. "Meanwhile I can give you tea," she said; "it is paid for; *paga sempre la mia Alma.*"

"If that's Italian," said Alan, "I don't understand it. If you want my opinion, I think that silver will go lower yet."

"Prophet of ill," she said, "bird or devil! But I beg your pardon. Ah!"

The little cry was called forth by the light whir of the electric bell. She turned expectant to the doorway, in which was presently framed a very handsome young man, dark and slight, with sleek black head and sleek moustache.

"How is silver?" she asked. "Come In and don't stand smiling on the threshold; and shake hands with Mr. Alan Carter of Colorado, who sits there at ease and says that silver will go lower yet."

"Indeed?" said the newcomer slowly, smiling and showing the gleam of white teeth below the little educated moustache.

"Indeed" is a small word and not obviously pregnant with meaning; it is strange that this single word, politely uttered by a youth who turned his soft eyes on him, should have aroused in Alan a sudden desire to throttle the speaker. It seemed to convey to him in two syllables the intimation that the soft-tongued youth regarded him as a bear socially and professionally, clumsy in a lady's room and bent on depreciating the securities of silver-producing countries for his own ends.

"Don't you know each other?" asked Miss Archer, who had been looking from one to the other. "This is Mr. Bertram Grosshart; I thought you would have met him at his father's—in the City, I mean, of course; not at the West End."

"That is too bad," murmured the youth, as he received his teacup from the little plump hand of Alma; "I am always at home—always, except when you allow me to come to you."

"In the City," she said to Alan, "he is hard as nails, but in the hands of a duchess soft as wax."

"You are too cruel," he said.

He never took his eyes off her. This staring under half-dropped lids vexed Alan; the politeness of young Mr. Grosshart seemed a fine insolence; he determined to go.

"He rarely honors me here," continued Miss Archer; "but in the City we are great allies, almost partners."

"Quite, I hope," said he, still gazing on her.

"What would your father say?" asked she. "He is also a partner in the great firm of Grosshart," she said, turning again to Alan; "but we are partners, colleagues, brother-officers in the campaign. He is a fine business talent, though you wouldn't think it. Would you?"

The expected answer stuck in Alan's throat. He had moved near to the window and found himself wondering

how a slim young man would look crashing down through the green branches below him. It was clearly time for him to go. After all, nothing could be more harmless than the young man. He must go; he had grown suddenly too large for the room, and so clumsy that, if he moved about, he must knock over things. This was the effect of the admirable self-possession of a young man of charming manners. Miss Archer begged him to come again, but her request sounded artificial, conventional in his ears. Before he was out of the room he heard Bertram Grosshart laugh softly, and inferred that it was at him. As he walked away he was ashamed of himself; he said to himself that he was an egregious ass.

CHAPTER IV.

THOUGH Alan could leave the flat of Millicent Archer it was not so easy to leave her image and the recurring mockery of her eyes. Thoughts of her intruded at many moments. He put them from him, saying curtly to himself that he did not like her. How should he like a young woman who was clever, cold, and confident, who made no appeal to the chivalry which he had always supposed to be due from man to woman? It could not be that he should not dislike this self-confident lady.

Alan had been ready at all times to lend a helping hand to the weaker sex.

For the rest, they had played no part in his life. His life had been austere, given wholly since his boyhood to daily work and plans of work. For him there had been no idle hours of musing on imaginary loves, no mad hours of drink and revelry in which the strong grow weak. To such a man on his first holiday this beautiful, interesting being came as a provocation, a vexation. He took himself to task for wasting thoughts upon her. For a full week after his visit to her flat he did not see her face. He did not visit her or go where he was likely to see her. He was honest with himself and recognized with a frown and a smile that, were he not on his guard, he might, even he, drift among faint, perplexing currents till the full tide of passion was on him like a danger; and, though he could not even imagine himself as passion's slave, he would establish his masterhood at the outset. So he looked on this strange woman with

his mind's eye clear and critical. He summed up her qualities. She was cold, and if she chose a man, would choose with consummate prudence—and therefore not such an one as he. She loved money and the excitement of speculation, and her husband would be a rich man—and therefore not he. She was greedy of power and would desire to rule her husband; and therefore he would none of her. He would not take her, if she were willing. He laughed at himself for the thought, but he held to it none the less. For both, for him as for her, it would be mere madness. That soft, sweet youth was fitter mate for her, her agent in the City, her aide-de-camp in society. And for himself? Well, he had done without women and might still. If some day he should hold it wise to marry—and at this moment of his circling thoughts a faint vision would arise before him, a picture of a housewife with jam-pots and gentle eyes

turned to him for direction. And this picture would put an end to such thoughts for that time; it aroused sudden unreasonable anger, and he told himself that he was not to moon about thinking of women. He would keep his eyes from this strange woman and his thoughts from all. He had done harder tasks than that. Alan's determination was helped by the growth of his City matters. If Mr. Grosshart gave, as Alan thought, too much time to preliminary discussion, he introduced him meanwhile to other men who occupied him also with adjourned debates. He had a lesson in patience, and submission to the patent information-pump. He told financiers the truth so far as he knew it, and suspected that they were all too subtle to believe him.

Two or three times, when Alan was in or near to the important premises of Messrs. Grosshart, he met young Bertram, cool, elegant, and immovably

polite; and each time he was stirred to an absurd resentment. Once, when he left the office rather abruptly because the youth came in, he found a hansom at the door and in the hansom Miss Archer. He leapt to the conclusion that she and young Bertram had come together; he flushed with anger. The narrow street was full of young men, almost all dark and slim. Where were the ruddy, fair-haired Saxon youth, who are still held typical? The dark young men hurried in all directions with empty hands, in and out of doors; but though intent on business, all had at least a glance for the lady sitting in the cab. A few bowed to her with an air of zeal, of pride in the privilege; one seemed to be hesitating if he might not go to speak to her when she called Alan to her. "What from Colorado?" she asked; "will more silver-mines close? And why have you not been to see me again? You had a great success with

Alma ; she thinks you like Samson, and that it was kind of you not to take away our little flat upon your back. Is silver at its lowest? You may be frank with me."

"I'm frank with everybody," he said curtly.

"Bertram says you are wily."

"Bertram?" asked he grimly; and here he was not frank in putting a tone of inquiry into his voice, as if he did not know who Bertram was. Such is the influence of woman on masculine candor.

"Bertram Grosshart: you know him; you met him at my rooms."

On this he made no comment, regarding her in silence as she sat serene amid the bustle of the street. She fascinated him. Then, shaking himself, as it were, back to practical affairs, "I think that silver will go lower," he said.

"Bertram says not," she said, leaning forward confidentially on the doors

of the hansom. He shrugged his shoulders, muttered some words of an appointment, and took himself away. He felt stifled in the hurrying crowd ; he went towards the river ; he made up his mind to avoid this lady with even greater care. This was by no means difficult. He was not likely to meet her often by mere chance in the amazing labyrinths of London, nor was he overwhelmed with invitations to parties where he might see her. To the social world, wherein he had meandered as a youth, he was conveniently and comfortably dead. He was erased from lists, forgotten by butlers. To his new acquaintance, who asked him to dinner, he, for the most part, made excuses. They thought him a profound but unsociable man, with all his thoughts in the stock market, while he tramped the ancient streets for exercise, and thought of many things. But at last there came to him an invitation which he decided that he must

accept. It happened that Mr. Grosshart had been building for himself a country house, of which report voices of all the Press spoke with all the journalistic phrases of eulogy. Mr. Grosshart, and Mrs. Grosshart too, had been very attentive to the emissary from Colorado; and, as he had refused two of their invitations in the week, he thought that bare civility compelled him to join the party of friends who were to be taken from London to view the new palace and dine on cold viands in the unfinished dining-room, and to be brought back by special train in the cool of the evening. If, as might well be, Miss Archer were of the party, after all he would not confess to himself that he was afraid of a woman.

CHAPTER V.

IT was a brooding day. As the party drove from the little country station, they passed through a grass country; the trees in the hedgerows looked heavy in leaf, almost black in their full foliage, silent and still. And the host seemed to brood like the day. His face in the light of the country seemed to Alan more yellow and more deeply lined than in the gloom of City streets and offices. His heavy figure seemed to stoop more, as under the burden of markets; his eyes were dull, and he looked across the expanse of green fields as if he did not see them. It is likely that his mind was still busy with the shares and bonds which he

had left behind; for there had been anxious and depressing times in the commercial and financial worlds, and the mind of the financier slipped easily back into the familiar round of anxieties and hopes. He had placed the ladies, who had come by that train, with their attendant men, in the wagonettes and landaus, and he himself, perhaps, that he might indulge his thoughts in silence, had invited Alan to sit beside him in the phaeton.

When the well-matched pair of horses turned themselves through the lodge-gates, Mr. Grosshart looked around him with a faint interest. This was his newest possession. He mentioned the distance from the lodge to the house. When they had traveled about half a mile farther, he allowed his whip to drop towards the right, and Alan, following the direction with his eyes, saw far away and below them the gleam of water, and an old house buried in ancient trees.

"The lake," said Mr. Grosshart. He said "lage." When he spoke wearily, as he spoke on that day, the German accent, which he had inherited from his father, became more strong.

"And the house?" asked Alan.

"The old house," said Mr. Grosshart; "small and tamp."

"It looks pleasant," said Alan. "What shall you do with it?"

"I don't know; give it to the Barson perhaps."

By this time they had reached the parting of the ways, where the old road went softly downward toward the old house, and the new road, hard and bare, went onward and leftward towards the new house; and presently they came in sight of this new castle eminent upon its naked hill. It looked vast, towering above the orderly plantations of young trees, like an old château scraped to a raw newness, built on the highest, barest bit of the old umbrageous park, displaying a fine

foreign air in a landscape deeply and greenly English. A flag hung limp upon the topmost tower.

Before luncheon the house was to be seen; and the party from London followed their host through long, unfurnished passages and large, unfurnished rooms; the ball-room, the state drawing-room, the other drawing-rooms, the library with no book but a Bradshaw on a table, the breakfast-room, the morning-room, the rooms for which no names seemed to be left; and so they came at last, a sad-eyed procession, to the winter-garden, which for the present had no sweeter decoration than pipes and gratings and fine gravel. Beyond the winter-garden were a cluster of small rooms, which had been furnished first for the immediate use of the family, if any of them cared to live there before the army of decorators had finished their work in the great spaces of the castle. In one of these little rooms the party

burst in upon two men intent upon a game of cards; and in the white, malignant face, which one of them turned on the intruders, Alan recognized with a strange tremor of the heart the face of Ruthven Delmayne, whom he had seen last ten years before at his grandfather's dinner-party, the last dinner which he had eaten in his grandfather's house. He had often thought of that night and remembered every face that was there; but he wondered almost instantly that he had recognized this face, so old and ill had it grown in these ten brief years. He seemed to Alan like mere ashes; the hand which held the cards was tremulous; the eyes were veiled like the eyes of a dying hawk. He did not rise from his chair when his companion rose; he only snarled at his host for the interruption; he resented their superior strength and the prattle of their talk. Before the manifest ill-will of his looks the party

made haste away. "He's a dead man," Mr. Grosshart mumbled when the door was shut upon the joyless game and they were traversing again the flowerless winter-garden.

And now there came hurrying to meet them through the sounding empty rooms a young curate of the parish, whose rosy, simple face contrasted with the place and with the somewhat listless guests. "They've done their dinner, Mr. Grosshart," he said with a clear, bell-like voice; "they are all waiting—if you would say one little word!"

The great financier looked gloomily upon him.

"They would think so much of it," said the curate. Mr. Grosshart nodded slowly, and followed the curate, and the guests followed Mr. Grosshart. In one of the rooms they stopped a moment to watch an Italian workman dexterously carving some native stone to harmonize with an old Italian man-

telpiece, which had been imported at great cost. But the manifest impatience of the young clergyman led them forward, and they passed out from the grand sepulchral house into the untempered sunlight of the naked hill. Near to the house a large tent had been put up, and in it a dinner had been given to the villagers, in honor of the completion of the new house of their new lord.

Mr. Grosshart paused in the entrance of the large tent, filled with heavy fumes of beef and beer; and the loud talk and laughter of the well-fed crowd sank into silence.

"Three cheers for Mr. Grosshart!" cried the agent of the property, who presided at the feast; and he led the cheering with a will. "One cheer more!" cried the curate; and then arose, wavering and uncertain, the jovial chorus which proclaimed that Mr. Grosshart was "a jolly good fellow," that chorus which greets melan-

choly statesmen, war-worn generals, possibly even ladies bountiful.

"For he's a jolly good fellow!" roared the crowd till the tent trembled; and the jolly good fellow stood grim, ponderous, stooping, gazing upon them with melancholy, disdainful eyes. When the roaring had ceased, he said, "I hope you have all had enough to eat." He said it gravely, and with the German accent at its strongest, but after an uneasy moment the speech was taken for a pleasantry, and received with much laughter, rapping of knives, and tramping of feet. The orator opened his mouth as if to say more, but shut it again as if it were not worth while; and the agent thereupon called for more cheers, and, bowing gloomily, the hero of the festival withdrew.

And now it was time for the picnic luncheon of the guests, who followed their host again into the house, and cheered up visibly when they entered.

the bare dining-room, and remembered the excellence of the Grosshart cook. Mrs. Grosshart and another section of the visitors were already at luncheon, and the new-comers lost no time in getting also to the table. A more genial atmosphere was diffused, and champagne set the oppressed tongues wagging. Those who were far enough from the ends of the table spoke of their host and hostess, criticised the place, guessed the amount of their wealth. "A hundred thousand a year," suggested one. "More, more!" cried his neighbor, scandalized by so modest an estimate; "he might make that in a week." "Ah!" There was a note of piety in the exclamation, and the lady glanced with reverence at Mr. Grosshart as at a high priest of mysteries. There he sat brooding; perhaps he was planning a week now. There was something solemn in the thought of such sums as these; the voices of the speakers were low; it was

like the atmosphere of "Christie's" immediately after a big sale, when only a few zealots yet remain flushed by large prices and the warm perfume of opulent humanity, and the word "guineas" is murmured softly in all the air. The atmosphere so delicate and fragrant was grateful to the guests; they felt that they were getting the very best, were floating at ease on a full tide of deep prosperity; they felt that in the eyes of the country folk they all were millionaires. Only to Alan it was not wholly satisfactory. He wondered why, after ten years of plain, and often poor food, he did not care more for dainties and good wine. All meals were too long for him, this midday meal most of all. He slipped out as soon as any one rose from the full board, and found his way through a little door on to the broad, gravelled terrace, which bounded one side of the wide-spreading towered house.

CHAPTER VI.

DURING the interminable luncheon a change had come in the air. Somewhere a thunder shower must have passed; or perhaps it was only to Alan's eyes and mouth but just relieved from the dining-room and savors of choice food that the outer air moved with a freshness more delightful. He paused in the doorway, hat in hand, to enjoy the delicate motion of the air, and in the same moment he was aware of a tall, slender woman, who leaned on the wall of the terrace gazing away over the wide expanse of pleasant lands. He could only see her back,

but he knew her before she moved; yet there was not a minute before she turned, though she could not have heard him. Truly she had fine perceptions, whether or no she could hear the undertone of moving markets. When Miss Archer turned her face Alan started; this was a face which he had never seen, eloquent of passionate grief, with eyes made larger by unshed tears; it seemed for the first time all womanly. Emotion summoned emotion; a great responsive tide of feeling welled up in the man. Yet he had only crossed the terrace to her side when he doubted if his imagination had not tricked him. She turned away again, without even a nod of welcome, to look at the great plain which stretched away below her; and when he stood by her side and she looked at him again, there was the usual look, which he knew so well, a little hard, a little mocking, a little defiant.

"It has come," she said.

"What has come?"

"I'm broke."

"You've lost money?"

"All," she said, moving her hands as if she were tossing her last handful to the country below.

"No, no," he said.

"Yes, yes," said she, mocking his tone; "you needn't be so tragic. I've been there before, as you say in Colorado."

The fountain of emotion had fallen flat within him; he was chilled, annoyed, still half incredulous. She felt his incredulity.

"It is a fact," she said gravely. "This speculation has not been an idle woman's game with me. I'm not playing the fool; I'm not trying to annoy you. It is serious; it always has been serious. I made my first money to buy things for my mother when she was ill, dying. It was want of money, want of good food, which

made her die ; I was too late to save her, but I made her comfortable, happy, at rest. It is easy for men to despise money. But just think of women ! My mother died for want of it, and I——do you know what money is to young girls when hunger comes ? I've made my money honestly."

Alan tried but could not speak. There was only an inaudible murmur which was almost a groan.

"And now like a fool," she said, "I've gone too quick ; I was tired of beaverism ; that is Carlyle, you know ; I planned a big thing and here I am broke. I left it too much to Bertram."

"If he has lost your money he can pay it back," said Alan with an abrupt nod of the head towards the castle behind them.

"I don't take gifts of money. And, besides, we have quarreled. I told him he was a fool and he chose to be offended."

"And you mean that you have lost

all, that you are as before, poor, penniless?"

"I'm down again at the two fifty."

"At the two fifty?"

"There was a £250 which was the seed of my little tree of fortune."

"£250!"

"Is the sum so amazing? I said I didn't take gifts of money; but I took that; I couldn't help it."

"You couldn't help it?"

She looked at him, laughing. "Are you a parrot?" she asked. He did not answer; he was staring at her.

"You think that humbug," she went on, "that I couldn't help it! But it was true. It was flung to us by a silly young fellow whose fine feelings were shocked at the sight of two ladies with not enough to eat. He was the biggest fool I ever heard of."

"Yes?" he asked stupidly. His thoughts came crowding and stopped his tongue.

"The biggest fool imaginable!" she

said with a more judicial air. "He would have had everything—power, wealth, which is more than half of power; and he chucked it all for a fad."

"And what became of him?" asked Alan, who had found the use of his tongue.

"Oh, he died, or something. Any way, he vanished like a dream in a long, light frock-coat, and we couldn't give him back the money, and it was lucky for us that we couldn't. His friend brought it to us—his adoring, admiring friend."

"The friend of the fool!"

"Yes, the fool's friend. Mr. Thomas Seafeld was his name."

"Yes," said Alan vaguely.

"You know him?" she asked quickly.

"I've heard his name."

"I don't know why you should," she said; "he is nobody, poor dear! And never will be anybody; he's too good."

"Is he a good fellow? You like him?"

"Tommy! I love him."

"Oh!"

"He was ridiculous, of course; he would take such care of me."

Alan laughed aloud.

"I can imagine that," he said.

"Why? You don't know him."

"I mean that I can imagine a man wanting to take care of you."

"*You* say that sort of thing! How grotesque! Perhaps you will compliment me on my looks, on my fine eyes."

"I'll help you if I can," said he bluntly. "Look here! This precious combination of yours? Was it mainly of things which have fallen because silver is so cheap? Mexicans? Eh?"

"They were a great part."

"They are bound to improve, if you can hold on. Let us see if between us we can't afford to keep them. What have you got? It's business, you know. Tell me the whole case."

She agreed after a minute's thought. Standing there, with one well-gloved hand resting lightly on the wall, without hesitation and without notes, she gave him in a few minutes a clear statement of her position. He listened quietly. When his eyes rested on her, he wondered at the ability, the lucidity of this fascinating creature; when his eyes turned from her, he saw almost as clearly a pale, slight girl, clad in a rusty gown, crouching under the dim window of a degraded room, her wasted cheek, her large, feverish eyes. A fool, quotha! If he had been a fool he thanked God for his folly.

When she had made an end of her statement he gave her good reasons for entering into partnership with him till this crisis had passed. He could afford to help her over the immediate settlement; he was confident that she had only been a little too impatient, and that the rise, which she had looked for, would not be long delayed, that in

a very short time they could dissolve this informal partnership with a profit for both. "Take my offer," he said; "I give you my word of honor that I believe I shall make money by it."

"Done!" she said; and she put her slender hand in his. "I believe in you and I thank you," she said.

"That's all right," said he.

"And now, for pity's sake, take me to food," she said; "I don't want to return to starvation before I need."

As they went in they met some of the party wandering out, some flushed, most cross, all aimless. They had to drift about till it was time to go.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was but natural that for the next few days Alan and Millicent should meet often. They met as partners in business, and their talk was almost all of shares and bonds. Yet there were other questions which rose to Alan's lips, making his heart beat with the question whether he should ask or no.

One summer evening in Miss Archer's high flat, when the windows stood wide open to the drowsy roar of London, he asked her with a careful carelessness if she ever heard from the Mr. Seafeld whom she had mentioned, "the friend of the fool."

"From Tommy?" she said. "Oh

yes, once a fortnight. He's regular as rates and taxes. It is a detail," she added presently, "but he fancies himself in love with me."

"Poor Tommy!" muttered Alan.

"It would be fatal," she said. "Think what his mother and sisters must think of me."

"Why should they think any harm?"

"Why? Their ideas are all Portland Place; they are bounded by the Portland Gardens at one end and stop short of the Langham Hotel at the other. Fancy what they must think of a girl who has been in want of regular meals! They adore Tommy, but they were glad when he went to Africa."

"And he? Has he larger views?"

"Not much," she said. "I am sure he cuts his little whiskers just the same and has found his Portland Place in Capetown. He's a dear."

There was a pause. Alan sat thinking, frowning at his boots. "And the

friend," he said at last, "the fool? What was his name?"

"Carteret," she answered; "he was the grandson of old Sir Simon Carter—Carter? Carteret? It's *you!*"

She jumped up; she came towards him looking intently at his face. "It's you," she repeated.

"Yes; I'm the fool."

"Well!" She sat down and stared at him still. "What an extraordinary thing! You that smart, insolent young man in the light coat? Yes, that's why you've puzzled me and bothered me and kept me thinking. How long have you known this—known that I was I?"

"I only found it out the other day—that day on the terrace at the castle."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I nearly did, though I didn't mean to."

"You ought to have told me at once. Do you think I would have taken your help again, your money

again. Why, I have hated you all these years."

"You haven't taken my money; I shall make money; it was good business."

"You ought to have told me. I don't know, but I think I am furious; I think I hate you still. Go away and let me think! I shall pay you back the £250; that's certain."

"I don't think I'll take it. No; don't be in a hurry! Don't be rash! I'll come to-morrow."

"Yes, yes, go! I can't bear it."

She turned away to the window, and he picked up his hat and went.

On the next evening, when he came again, he stopped outside her door before he rang. His heart was beating. She was wonderful, incomprehensible, a woman. Would she forgive him for having saved her from starvation? Perhaps she would forgive him and hate. He could read her head a little but her heart not a jot. That he

should be standing there on the bare, dimlighted landing, afraid to ring the bell! At that thought he rang it.

When he entered the room Miss Archer came to meet him with her eyes shining. "I've got such a splendid idea," she cried out before he could speak. "I couldn't sleep for thinking of it; it came like a flash, but it abides like the Marble Arch."

"Then you ar'n't angry with me," said Alan, sticking to his own idea.

"No, no—what for? Stuff!" she said. "Listen to me. You must put the world to rights."

"What?"

"My dear man, you are *the* man, simply *the* man."

"The man for what?"

"For a leader. Can't you see that you've had a training that is simply amazing, absolutely unique—Eton and Oxford and all that, and then a working man? Educated for a landlord, then a laborer, then a bit of a

capitalist. You have been the things that other men talk about, the things that matter. You know what it is to be rich and to be poor; to work for wages and pay rent for a workman's room; to be forced to think of an old age of want; and with all that you've the manners and methods of public schools and the ways of talking."

Alan burst out laughing. His chief feeling was a great relief.

"You said I was a fool," he said; "will you be led by a fool?"

"Oh!" she said; "that was the young man in the long frockcoat."

"Me," he said stoutly.

"But isn't it a great idea?" she persisted.

"It's not new," he said, "any way. I've often thought of something of the sort; I used to think of it in my tent at night, when we were prospecting. I have had a rum training; that's a fact."

"Well, then, start!" she cried with a tap of her foot.

"And what am I to start as?"

"As a man."

"That's rather wide," he said.

"An honest man, a practical man."

He shook his head.

"What are you then?" she asked; but he seemed in no haste to answer her. He stood looking at her, wondering at her. What had become of her mood of yesterday? Did she really care what he did, or what would become of him?

"Do you care?" he asked.

"I hate to see men throw away their lives," she said. "With your training you can be Prime Minister."

He stood looking at her gravely.

"Why should *you* care?" he asked at last. "I think you are rather inhuman: you make no allowance for feeling."

"What do you mean?"

"You treat me like a machine: you think me fit for a certain job and you give me a shove. This idea of yours—I used to talk it over with my mate.

He taught me to box and to understand the point of view of the average workman. My mate was not an average man; he was one in ten thousand. He told me, as you tell me, that I might be a leader, a power. Only he put it on the ground of duty."

"So do I; your training makes it your duty."

"It doesn't tempt me."

"Duty seldom does."

"A career of cold-blooded ambition? No. I am human. If I am to go that way I will not go alone."

"What do you mean?"

"Yes, you are amazing. You are a young and beautiful woman, and you treat men as if they were mechanical dolls. Have you never even imagined a man's love?"

"A man's love! Yes," she cried out with the dark eyes flashing, "there was a time when I was starving, and how do you suppose it struck me then? A man's love!"

"My God!" he said; "do you make no distinctions?"

"It was no time for distinctions then. It was the danger, the horror; one had simply to say to oneself that death was better. Don't talk to me of men and men's love; don't talk to me of anything."

"That suits me well enough," he said, and he shut his mouth grimly.

"Ah!" she said with sudden deep relief, "here's tea and Bunney." She began to prattle to Miss Bunney, who preceded the tea-tray into the room.

When Alan had had his cup of tea he walked away alone. As he walked beside the river he surprised a passer by suddenly driving his right fist into the palm of his left hand. It was the outward sign of a purpose just completely formed, the purpose of marrying Millicent Archer.

The passer, whose eyes were drawn to Alan by the sound of the hearty smack, only glanced at him and went

on. But when he had gone but a few steps farther he stopped and looked back. Alan, who was walking slowly in the same direction passed him again without notice. Then after another moment's hesitation the other followed Alan again, and when he had overtaken him said with a faint blush and an added stiffness of manner, "I beg your pardon." Alan, who was thinking of Millicent, stopped with a slight start and looked at him. He saw a very correct person with a face a little too thin and a figure a little too stiff for his years, neat and neatly shaved beneath the short, accurate whiskers which covered the cheek-bones. "I beg your pardon," said this gentleman with a slight embarrassment, as of one to whom it cost an effort to address a stranger in the street—"I beg your pardon, but you are so like a friend of mine, that I—that I— It is impossible. I'm afraid, but— Would you mind telling me your name?"

"Carter," said Alan, giving the name which now came naturally to his lips.

"Carter!"

"No—I mean Carteret," said Alan, who had just been thinking that his first step towards marriage must be the return to himself. He saw the face before him turn white even to the lips, and the eyes staring at him. The eyes were familiar. Yes, his boyhood looked out of them. "Tommy!" he cried out. "My word!"

Tommy opened his mouth, but no words came. It was a relief to him that Alan gripped his arm to the point of pain. "I thought you were in Africa," said Alan.

"And I thought you were dead," said Tommy, and all his face was quivering.

CHAPTER VIII.

THAT evening the two friends sat together in the room which Alan had taken for his visit to London. The room was almost dark, and both its occupants were almost wholly silent. Alan smoked at intervals the familiar pipe which he had learned to value in the West—at intervals, and with no keen air of enjoyment, for to him, as to many Englishmen, the chief value of smoking was as an obvious excuse for silence. Silence is a large part of the happiness of many a young Briton; he has a mistrust of words; he feels that he cannot make a fool of himself with a stopper in his mouth. So friends smoke together, occupied, at rest, enjoying the society of each other but

not mentioning it. In the dusk, but lightly perfumed by the haze of tobacco, Alan and Tommy could scarcely see each other's faces, but they were happy in that they were together after many years, and in silence they wondered at the chances and changes of life.

The stillness was broken by a low laugh from Alan.

"I'm awfully sorry," he said; "I beg your pardon."

"What for?" asked Tommy, surprised, uneasy.

He was a little nervous that evening. This return of his friend, this return, as it were, from the dead, was at once a deep joy and a disturbance. The amazing always distressed him, offended his sense of order. He started at the sound of Alan's laugh.

"You are thinking," said Alan, "that it would have been better for me to have remained a memory."

"Oh, Alan! Oh! I wish you wouldn't say such things."

"That's word for word what you used to say when we were boys: it's jolly to hear you. But you know it bothers you, worries you, eh?"

"What?" asked Tommy, with reproach in his tone.

"My turning up again. You are beginning to wonder what I ought to do, or what you ought to do with me. You feel awfully responsible. You are wondering if I've got any wild habits, if my clubs will take me back, if anybody but you will believe that I am I."

"There can't be the least difficulty," said Tommy, but with anxiety clearly audible in his voice. "You must come with me the first thing in the morning to your lawyer."

"My lawyer! Who's he?"

"Why, your grandfather's lawyer, of course—Marley. You haven't forgotten him?"

"I knew you'd been thinking how to set me up again," said Alan, laughing grimly; "I feel eighteen again."

"We must consult Marley," said Tommy gravely; "and, if he approves, you must go to your clubs and see the secretaries, and——"

"And see if they will take me off the list of the dead. It's awfully irregular, and I know you feel it."

"I wish you wouldn't," said Tommy.

"And next?" asked Alan.

"My idea would be to go to the editor of a society paper—the very best one of course—and give him the outline of your story; as little as possible, of course."

"That's like you, Tommy. I'll leave out the people I've shot at sight in bars, and the colossal fortunes which I have made and lost at poker, and all the other daily events of the West."

"I do wish you would be serious," said Tommy; "it really is rather anxious work in a way. There's the Moseley-Carterets, you know—and your two names. I really do wish you hadn't changed your name."

"It has a shady look; but Carteret ultimus had to die. He is dead, anyhow. You remember Carteret ultimus?"

"I remember what rot you used to talk."

"It was the finest sense. You needn't expect me to shed a tear for the little beast."

"Ah, but you must take your own name again," said Tommy earnestly.

"Yes, I mean to. I had just made up my mind that I must when I met you, you villain, on the embankment. You see——"

He paused. Then he filled his pipe, lighted it slowly, and began to smoke again.

Tommy looked at his friend's face lighted for the moment by the match. It was the same old face. His anxieties lessened; his confidence leapt up, and the deep joy of his heart.

"You spoke of the Moseley-Carterets," said Alan, after a pause; "they won't mind my being alive? it won't hurt them?"

"No, my dear chap, I'm afraid it's quite certain you've no claim on anything. I went into all that with Marley when you——"

"When I died," said Alan.

"When you were lost," said Tommy. "It won't make a penny of difference to the Moseley-Carterets, worse luck! Oh, Alan, when I think of what you have flung away!"

"I've still got my life."

"Yes, old chap!"

The words came with such a depth of affection that Tommy, hearing his own voice, blushed faintly in the darkness.

"You shall have your own way," said Alan presently; "you shall trot me round to lawyers and clubs and editors, and bring me to life in your own way. It's the least I can do for you. But now tell me about yourself. I've asked about you, of course; I knew you were not dead; I heard you had a good opening in South Africa."

"Yes," said Tommy; "I've been doing pretty well."

"And what has brought you home? Eh? What is it? A woman?"

He asked the question with a little abrupt laugh, which to an auditor of finer ear would not have rung true.

"Is it a woman, Tommy?" he asked again, after a time of silence which seemed long in the darkness of the room.

"Yes," said Tommy at last; "but don't laugh about it."

"Tell me," said Alan briefly; and sitting in the gloom, which hid his face from his friend, he heard the simple tale of Tommy's love.

"It's the girl whom you put in my charge," said Tommy. "How strange that is! How strange it all is!"

Alan assented with a sort of grunt, and smoked.

"You can have no idea what she is," said Tommy; "how brave, how clever, how good! She would not have touched that money of yours if her mother had not been dying, and now she will be so glad to pay you back.

She can pay now. Do you know, she's wonderful ; she has made herself quite a little fortune with that loan of yours. I never thought I should be able to introduce you to her."

There came a break in the last words which touched Alan more than a thousand protestations.

"She was so good to her mother," said Tommy.

"And your mother?" asked Alan.

"Oh, she will be all right," said Tommy, less cheerfully. "You see, she has some old-fashioned prejudices. Poor Mrs. Archer was a lady—oh yes, in all senses—but her father—well, he was a singer, and I'm afraid not a very good one, and not a very good man—very weak, you know ; and he died and left them almost starving. And my people, you see——"

"Yes, I remember your people."

"Oh, but they will come round. And, any way, I am in a position now, and——"

"And with this growing fortune of the lady——"

"Ah, don't say that!" said Tommy, with pain in his voice. "Indeed, I wish she had nothing. I wish she had not this talent—it's wonderful, but I don't like it. Did I tell you what it was? It's a talent for speculation."

Alan smiled rather bitterly as he bit the pipe in his mouth, remembering, with a start, that the next day was that over which this brilliant speculatrix was to be tided by his help. He had been thinking of other things than money.

"You would make her give up that," he said, between his teeth.

"Yes, she would—I think she would in time."

"For you?"

"Yes; I think, I hope so. Do you remember her at all?"

There was a pause before Alan answered.

"I seem to remember a thin white face and big eyes," he said.

"Now she is splendid and beautiful. When I think of her as she is I am afraid to hope. She is too splendid for me. And yet——"

"And yet she loves you."

"I don't know that. I know that I love her."

Then there came another pause. At last Alan asked again, "Does she know that you are in England?"

"No. I got away by an earlier boat than I hoped. You are the first person I have seen since I landed. Isn't it wonderful that you should be the first?"

"I, the dead man. But never mind that! You will see her to-morrow."

"No. I shall write first. I don't think it's fair to take her by surprise."

"You are a good chap, Tommy."

Praise always made Mr. Seafeld uneasy. "I don't want to take advantage of her; that's all," said he. "I will write to-morrow and ask if I may go to her the day after."

And Alan sitting, silent, told himself that he was glad of the morrow.

One day, one golden day was his. On that day, between dawn and dusk the crisis of their little business partnership would be passed; all was in train; he would have done her a little service—and Tommy. He sat with his burnt-out pipe in his hand, motionless, glad of the cover of soft darkness, with eyes wide open, seeing nothing. Or did they see in the grateful blankness pictures of the might-have-been, of the race which he might have won at Eton with another than Tommy for his stroke, of the halls of his ancestors where he would now be lord but for the whim of the day, of the woman who might have come to him but for this claim of a returning friendship? He had foregone fortune and high estate, and now must he forego the love of his heart. From a vision of the boatmen's rafts at Eton thronged by gay coats and faces bright with boyhood and zeal for the winner of the race, he started to hear the level voice

of his friend telling with a slight flavor of self-satisfaction his admirable plans. "My people don't know that I have arrived yet. I found to-day that they had gone to Brighton, and I am going down by an early train. I have written to my mother, and she will get the letter just before I arrive, so that she will be spared the shock. I shall spend the day with them and sleep there and come up the next morning and then—"

"Then *she'll* be ready for you," said Alan.

Something seemed to hold him by the throat and to prevent him from saying more. After a time of silence Tommy said with a certain shyness, "But you, Alan—what about you out there in Colorado? Are you married or anything?"

"I'm not married or anything."

"Then why don't you come with us—I mean, if all goes right—why don't you come with us to South Africa? You are just the man for it."

"I shall go back westward. I must get to work again. When I'm idle I begin to feel that life is rot."

"Oh, don't say that!" said Tommy softly.

Alan laughed shortly.

"Don't be shocked!" he said; "it's the black dog of childhood. Work cures it. When one works one doesn't ask if work is rot; and if work's right life's right. And oughtn't you to be off to bed if you are going early to Brighton?"

"I was just thinking it was about time."

"Of course you were," said Alan, and he opened his door into the lighted passage, and pushed his friend gently out with a heavy hand on his shoulder.

Alan had not finished his early breakfast next morning when a note was brought to him. He set his teeth and opened the little missive with fingers which did not tremble. It was a day of important business, and the note was from his business partner; he fixed his mind on that. Half an hour

later he was shown into Miss Archer's flat. She turned from the window as he came in. She was dressed with a puritanical severity which she assumed for the London streets, and especially for occasions of business; her dark beauty was the more fine, the more distinguished in the eyes of the man who loved her. It was still early in that fateful day; hours yet remained; he was thankful for the excuse for seeing her. He was thinking of the carriage of her head when she asked, "What about the fall of yesterday?"

"The fall?" he repeated vaguely.

"You didn't notice it?" she cried with amazement.

"I knew they'd been falling."

"Of course they've been falling, and yesterday they—they went with a rush. Look here! Do attend! I've been doing it on paper."

She spread a sheet of foolscap on the table, and he came and stood beside her. The sums were very plainly and neatly done.

"The thing is simple," she said; "you know what I have. Now the sum which you will have to bring in is much larger than we expected. It seems to me that it will leave you next to nothing."

She looked at him with the delicate brows wrinkled.

He took the paper from the table and studied it for a minute in silence.

"I can do it," he said. "The fall seems to be confined to these things of ours," he added presently.

"Oh yes," she said, impatient of his masculine slowness; "it's Grosshart's."

"Grosshart's?"

"Yes, yes, or rather Bertram. It's his spite."

"Why?"

"Because he is spiteful as a pretty cross cat, or as a sort of woman."

"But why?"

"Oh, because I snubbed him. Can't you understand that? What does *he* matter?"

"I thought you liked him."

"You thought wrong." She looked at the clock. "You must be off," she said.

"Where?"

"To the City."

"Of course!" Yet he stood doubtful.

"Or shall I go? You seem strange, vague. Is anything the matter?"

Alan only answered with an abrupt laugh.

"I'll go," he said presently; "I know what has to be done."

There was another pause and then he said, "Good-bye!"

"Good-bye?"

"I'm going back."

"To Colorado? But our partnership?"

"I leave that to you. After to-day it will be all right. We are on the edge of the rise. When you dissolve with a profit you can send me my share."

"But Grosshart's?"

"They'll go no farther. Your friend may ease his spite; but he won't let it lead him to serious loss of money. Money is the one thing to him."

"And to you? You are going back to make more!" The words were quick and almost fierce.

"No," he said; "it's the work I want."

"And you despise the money?"

"No."

"What will you do with it?"

"I'll settle when I've made it." He stood looking at her with moody eyes.

"You'll be late," she said with a little laugh. "When do you sail—really?"

"To-morrow if I can get a berth."

"To-morrow! Saturday? Oh!"

"Good-bye!" he said.

"Good-bye!" She gave him her hand; their eyes met strangely, speaking some language other than their tongues; then he went out quickly.

CHAPTER IX.

THERE is a church of large spaces which, when the morning sunshine lies too hot upon the dust without, offers coolness and tempered light and rest to the weary or the worried. In the hush of this wide, grateful place, and in its most quiet corner, Millicent Archer, on the morning of the second day after the crisis in her money matters, knelt motionless as the statue of a kneeling saint. Absolute silence was about her, a soothing presence like the lightest touch upon her bowed head, the spirit of old religion, the stillness of peace. "The holy time was quiet as a nun breathless with adoration."

These words came back to her; she

sought to yield herself wholly to this spirit; she would not move a hair's breadth lest she should break the charm, forego the consolation.

At last with a sigh she rose from her knees and stood, a tall, straight figure, in the wide, empty church. She was reluctant; her feet delayed; slowly she pushed the heavy leather curtain and passed out into the garish sunshine, to the common noises of the awakening day. With her great eyes dazzled by the light of the street she almost touched a man who was walking by. The man stopped almost dead, and blinking a little she saw the face of Alan Carteret. "You!" It was all she could say.

"You are not a——" he began asking stupidly, looking from her to the great church beside her and again to her face illumined by the light, and the eyes still narrowed a little.

"I thought you were at sea," she said.

"I couldn't get a berth."

"Oh!"

It was lame talk. She gave a little laugh. "Oh no, I am not a Roman Catholic," she said, answering the question which he had forgotten in the wonder of her presence. "But I have been in there and I have been saying my prayers," she added quickly with a keen desire for candor; "I do sometimes."

"You might pray for me," he said gruffly.

She began to move slowly away, and he went naturally at her side.

"And when *do* you go?" she asked presently.

"To-morrow. By the bye, there are signs of the rise. All my information——"

"Oh, have done with information!" she cried out.

They went a little way in silence; then, "You have seen Tommy?" he asked.

"Did you send him?" she asked quickly by way of answer.

"He needed no sending; you know that; you know he came back for you; he's the best man in the world."

"Is that all? It's not saying much."

He almost growled at her flippancy. She was walking faster. "You ought to be proud," he said with emphasis, striding at her side.

"I refused him flat."

"What?" he cried out; and then presently, as she said no more, "Oh no," he went on; "it was a whim, a mood: you mustn't be hard on Tommy; he—he——"

"He's the best man in the world; oh, yes."

"Think of *him*, think of *him*," he said, pleading gruffly for his friend.

"I do think of him," she said, stopping for a moment and speaking differently; "I do think of him and I am sure it is best for him. Oh yes, of course he is sorry—sorry—sorry; but deep down, or as deep as he goes, something already tells him that he

will be glad—next year or the year after. If I had said yes he would be beset already by a swarm of little doubts.”

“But,” began Alan again doggedly.

She was suddenly angered by his insistence; she flashed out at him with quick words. “Oh yes, plead his cause, plead his cause! Isn’t that the phrase? I know that view of a woman—a sort of sweetmeat, a luxury, a prize to be gracefully bandied about. It’s ghastly, that view of a woman; men decide her fate; and this man hands her over to that man and——”

“I didn’t hand you over,” he broke in angrily; “you weren’t mine”—and thereon ensued silence, and a pause eloquent of unspoken thought. She was hurrying forward again, and her face was turned from him. Then she felt his hand on her arm; she felt herself compelled; she stood still again and faced him. “Why did you refuse him?” he asked, frowning.

"I have told you—because it is best for him—and for me."

"You must be wrong," he said; "you don't know what you've done; you'll be sorry all your life."

"Then let me be sorry all my life! What is it to you?" She faced him bravely, but he could see a slight quiver of the under-lip.

"What is it to me?" he cried out in scorn.

"What right have you to question me? It's insolent; it's cruel; it's——"

Her large eyes were brimming with unshed tears; her words failed.

"Is it for me?" he asked hoarsely.

"I'll never forgive you," she said in a low voice fiercely; but in spite of her words and her anger, a great wave of joy seemed to rise from the depth of his soul. She had moved quickly away from him, but he was by her side in a moment.

"Millicent!" he said, "Millicent!" and again he laid his hand upon her arm.

But she shook him off impatiently ; she would not look ; she would not answer. They had turned into a quiet street, in which, at that early hour, the houses seemed asleep ; but, had they been in the midst of a crowd, Alan must have spoken his next words. " You must give me an answer too," he said ; " if not him, me. Will you take me ? "

She turned on him with her face all trembling with feelings at war.

" It would be a mistake too—worse than the other. I should not be submissive ; I should gamble again ; you would hate me ; we should dispute, quarrel, fight."

" I would rather fight with you," he said doggedly, " than be at peace with another."

At that she laughed, and then he laughed too. They were like two children ; and the sun danced in heaven, or so it seemed to Alan.

It was perhaps an hour later, and Miss Alma Bunney, high up in the

high apartment of her adored friend, was fluttering like an anxious pigeon on her lofty pole, when Alan and Millicent were standing side by side on a quiet space of the embankment, and looking out upon the swelling tide and the great barges drifting up. "And this river runs to the sea," said Millicent.

"At present she runs from it," said Alan.

"Of course I mean when the tide turns, and the sea runs round the world."

"Eh?"

"Don't be stupid! I long to go too."

"And you shall; we will."

"Do you know that I have lived all my life in London? Do you see the little white clouds up in the blue? I am like a ship pining for her sails." Her hands were resting lightly on the wall; she moved them with a free gesture as if she would fly.

"Where will you go?"

"Everywhere. To Uruguay, to the Argentina."

"And first to Colorado?"

"Yes, and down those long prosaic lines which end in poetry, to Rio Grande and Santa Fé. They have all been names in lists of bonds and shares; but now I believe that they exist outside the City."

"They exist right enough," said Alan. "You will come to Colorado first?"

"Yes, to see your mate."

"And our mine—to see how much is in it."

"You shall see and I will believe you. If you knew what it is to me to be able to trust somebody. Santa Fé!" She spoke with a depth of conviction which was new to his ear. He realized in that moment the narrowness of the life which she had willed to lead, the self-defence, the self-suppression; how she would bloom, into what wonder of the world, when suspicion

and calculation yielded, as yield they would, to trust and love.

"We will both see," said he ; " we will be two adventurers."

She only answered with a happy laugh ; and he laid his hand on hers, where it rested on the wall, a mute sign of his firm purpose to be true. Then they talked of plans like two old married people, and if the sun no longer danced in heaven, yet to the lover this quiet talk was set to a deeper music, a finer joy.

CHAPTER X.

THE great steamer bound for the Cape was trembling for a start, a gaze-hound of the sea straining at the leash. The confusion was falling into order, passengers and baggage settling down. Alan had come on board to see the last of Tommy ; he knew that in a few minutes he must leave the ship ; and he knew, he felt that there was something more to be said, but he could not tell what it was. As the moments passed it was like a nightmare. They had written to one another, somewhat curtly as was their way, and Tommy's terse missive had shown due appreciation of Alan's generosity. It certainly

was no further expression of gratitude which Alan needed; that he feared; that made him uneasy. And yet there was something which irritated him in Tommy's silence at this last moment. Tommy stood, as his friend had seen him so often, silent, stiff, looking straight ahead. Even the soft hat which he had donned for the voyage and which might so easily have exhibited the slightest tilt towards romance or adventure, sat straight, as a preacher's above his straight, serious face. Conscious of the flight of time, Alan had to resist the impulse, to which he had often yielded in early days, the impulse to lay hands upon his friend and shake him. Just when he had given up hope of any further talk he heard something which made him jump with amazement. Still looking before him at the nearest funnel, Tommy gave a little cough and said, "I should like you to know that I am engaged."

"What?"

"It is a secret, but I should like you to know. It is not to be announced till I come back. I have promised my people to come back when I have wound up things there, and I have had an offer of a partnership in a firm of solicitors, a very good firm, and I—"

"Yes; I congratulate you, but you said—you said—Who on earth is it?"

"It's a Miss Rosa Finch. She is a great friend of my sisters. I think they always wished it. She is a dear, sweet girl."

"Ah!" said Alan with relief; "then all is really for the best."

"I think so, I think so."

As Alan stood on the shore and watched the steamer passing away, swift and smooth upon its course, he began to laugh. He was prone to laughter in those days. He thought that Tommy's life would be like that with his dear, sweet Finch—calm, smooth, admirably appointed; while

for him was an unsettled future, the ups and downs of fortune, the conflict of keen minds, disagreement sometimes, sometimes tears. And yet he had been moved to laughter by the mere thought of sighing for the smoother, tamer course. Had he not one of the greatest gifts in the world? a comrade to his mind, and this comrade to be bound to him by all imaginable ties of Church and State. He had found her practical as Juliet; she, too, had appointed the time and place of their most quiet wedding; and in a few days as man and wife they would set forth to deal with the world. If differences, if troubles must come, beneath all differences there would be one love, against the troubles the mutual trust of two brave hearts. If natural tears were to be shed, they would on with good courage; the world was all before them, and they would not stand trembling before the changes and chances of life.

